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ABSTRACT

In 1992, Pine Crest School, an independent school in Fort Lauderdale (Florida) combined with three other independent schools in Broward County to form the Greater Fort Lauderdale Consortium and to build on their previous experience with summer programs to develop a summer enrichment program for low income high school students. The program, "Gain the Edge," served 180 students over 3 years. Each campus offered a 6-week enrichment program in mathematics, English, and a third subject varying by school at no cost to the student. A recurring theme for all the schools was that when teachers taught what they loved, a message was sent to students about developing a sense of pleasure in learning. Overall, the schools were most successful in the aspects of the project that came closest to their specialties: conveying a sense of pleasure in learning, teaching self-discipline in relation to study, providing individual attention, and developing skills for applying to college. Their results in relating to the public schools and to the business community were more mixed, with some failures in obtaining financial support. The joint functions of the Consortium are also described. (SLD)

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uderdale Christian School

PINE CREST SCHOOL
EST. 1934
EDUCATION • CHARACTER • LEADERSHIP

UNIVERSITY SCHOOL

WESTMINSTER ACADEMY
1971 25 1996

W030 794

# GAIN THE EDGE

## An Academic Summer Enrichment Program

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"Any teenager whose mental potential is not fully developed represents a loss to society."

—The Greater Fort Lauderdale Consortium of Secondary Schools in its proposal for *Gain the Edge*

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# GAIN THE EDGE

## An Academic Summer Enrichment Program

By Helen Soussou

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## *What Students Said*

*"We want to take students who have the ability to get into college and put it in their grasp."*

*"There aren't as many students here, so they get to talk to each and every one of us....and they expect more of us. It's one book per week here, and they just expect you to read it."*

*"Students said they spend three or four hours on homework each night....'It's helped me discipline myself to read.'" (a high school sophomore said).*

*"The thing I fell in love with is that the classes aren't that big."*

*"You're having fun while you're learning....This wasn't what I expected."*

*"The best part is the individual attention.....If you don't understand something, the teachers take the time to explain it to you."*

*"It's hard to get personal attention when the classes are so large (at public high school)....The whole time the teacher's saying, 'Be quiet! Pay attention!'"*

## About the Plan

Plan for Social Excellence, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that utilizes private funds to create or support innovative pilot projects in education in the United States.

The Plan supports programs that are fluid and responsive to the needs of individual schools and communities rather than programs that attempt to address these needs through a system-wide process of reform. This approach allows the Plan and its program participants to circumvent overburdened school bureaucracies in order to attack the roots of problems that prevent students from succeeding or excelling in their studies.

This "grassroots" approach to educational enrichment and reform is part of a growing trend among educators, community leaders, and parents, many of whom have been frustrated by a lack of opportunities for initiatives at the local level. This local emphasis ensures that the reform measures are appropriate to the populations and circumstances in which they are developed, and that these programs benefit the school, the district and the community in significant and lasting ways.

## About the Author

Helen Soussou is an independent consultant doing research and writing in the area of education, particularly the relationship between public schools and other community institutions. Her professional interests include school-business partnerships, school-linked services, and teacher collaboration with low income parents. She has written a previous monograph entitled *Employee Time-Off for Public Schools*, for Plan for Social Excellence, Inc.

THE *GAIN THE EDGE* PROGRAM


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# PREFACE

Traditionally, highly educated families have sought summer enrichment experiences for their teen-agers to help them broaden or deepen their academic and/or artistic skills, to assist them in their maturation, and to embellish their "extracurriculars" list for their college applications. These kinds of summer experiences have often given upper middle class students a "leg up" when it comes to competition for highly-contested seats in college.

Gradually, since the creation of the Upward Bound program in 1965 during the War on Poverty years, the concept of summer enrichment has been extended to low income and minority teens. These academic enrichment programs have often been developed by and located in colleges or universities, but in some instances they have also been created by independent secondary schools.

One of the first programs to be created by an independent school was started in 1978 at Pine Crest School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida under the leadership of Mario Peña who was then the principal of Pine Crest School. At that time, the idea of creating a summer program especially for those students who could never afford private school tuition during the school year was a new way of thinking for independent schools, traditionally bastions of the well-to-do who could pay for the highest quality education. In 1995, a relatively small percentage of independent schools are involved in such programs; still, in the last few years, more of them are recasting their mission and seeking ways to develop this type of participation in their broader community.

In 1992, Pine Crest School, again with the help of Mario Peña, now executive director of Plan for Social Excellence, Inc., joined with three other independent secondary schools in Broward County, Florida to form a consortium to develop a summer enrichment program for low income high school students in their county. Their plan was to use the experience of Pine Crest School and to extend it, thereby serving more students and engaging the talents of more independent school teachers. This monograph tells the story of that program, *Gain the Edge*, which served 180 students in three years while, at the same time,

strengthening the bonds between the four schools and enriching the professional experience of those teachers who took part.

With a small teacher-pupil ratio and devoted teachers, *Gain the Edge* individualized students and sought to maximize the potential of each student. The classroom culture was one of fostering the student's pleasure in learning. The program also emphasized SAT preparation for older students and focused on building the student's self-identity as a pre-college student. All of these attributes are part of what makes a good independent school special and worth the money to its customers. This is what independent schools do best. The following pages will tell the story of how the four schools involved in *Gain the Edge* built and carried out their program.

# INTRODUCTION

They accepted with enthusiasm and a desire to make a contribution to the community of Fort Lauderdale by helping some teenagers come closer to reaching their academic potential. Specifically, they wanted to help economically disadvantaged teens who had not seen themselves as college "material" or who could not clearly see the pathways for getting to college, but who had the intellectual capacity to succeed in higher education. In a way, this was "just down their alley" because their primary work was preparing teens for college.

But in other ways, this venture was new to these people. For example, they needed to interact with the public schools for recruitment and for follow-up of students. Yet, historically these and other independent schools had operated independently of public schools as though they were in two different realms. In fact, in many cases, the very marketing of the private school is centered on offering an alternative to the family that is not happy with the public school. Understandably, there is usually a reservoir of cultural distance and mutual suspicion between public and private school systems. So these schools had to deal with the barrier of cultural distance with public schools, their primary referral source.

In addition, these schools needed to approach the wider business community to seek funds, yet their primary experience in fundraising was within their own constituencies and they ordinarily had very little contact with the wider business community. So again, the schools had to overcome the barrier of distance from that part of the community from which they sought financing.

These four schools took up the challenge. They must be commended, first of all, for doing as William Prescott, the Headmaster of the Wheeler School in Rhode Island urges, just "Do it...get out there in the community and let people know you, both personally and institutionally."[8] These schools did that. They developed and ran a summer enrichment program for three years that offered valuable services to the participants.

*"The headmasters of Fort Lauderdale Christian School, Pine Crest School, University School, and Westminster Academy were offered the opportunity to join together to develop a summer enrichment program for low income teenagers."*

The schools were most successful in the aspects of the project that came closest to their specialties: the conveying of a sense of pleasure in learning, the teaching of self-discipline in relation to study habits, the offering of individual attention in an educational setting, the development of skills for applying to college.

Their results in relating to the public schools and to the business community were more mixed. They succeeded to some extent, but they did not achieve their original goals in enrollment figures, in follow-up or in dollars raised, although enrollment grew each year as the staff's community relations experience deepened and former students helped pass the word about the positive impact of the program.

This monograph is written to share with the reader the story of the *Gain the Edge* project with the hope that others will benefit from the experiences and the learnings of the teachers and administrators in these four schools who have given of themselves to help 180 low income students. The first section of the monograph will describe the roots and the beginnings of the project up through the acceptance of the proposal. The next major section will tell the story of the curriculum, classroom processes and materials used in each of the four settings. The third section will focus on joint functions of the consortium including publicity, recruitment, and fundraising. The final major section will discuss "ideas for next time" and ways to build upon the experience of this consortium.

*"This monograph is written to share with the reader the story of the Gain the Edge project with the hope that others will benefit from the experiences and the learnings of the teachers and administrators."*

[8] Alec L. Lee, Jr., "Working Together and Working: Public-Private Collaboration," project article for the Klingenstein Fellowship (at Columbia University Teachers College). April 14, 1995. Available from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

# BEGINNINGS

## *The Birth Of An Idea*

**Setting.** Broward County lies between Miami and Palm Beach on Florida's "Goldcoast." It has 23 miles of Atlantic coastline beaches, but it also reaches west to encompass a portion of the Everglades and part of the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. The county's total area is 1,211 square miles, but most of Broward's citizens live in the eastern third of the county where the dominant metropolis is Fort Lauderdale. People sometimes think of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County as one and the same; yet, the county has a total of 28 municipalities and continually seems to sprout new housing developments.

Although well-known in the wider world as a retirement community and a resort, Fort Lauderdale is also home to local offices of some national companies, a substantial small business community, several large malls, and fifteen museums. Broward County has a strong marine industry with one of the Southeast's deepest harbors at Port Everglades. Truck gardening and citrus groves are also important economic activities.

The 1991 estimated population of the metropolitan area was 1,271,790 of which 20.6% was under 19 years of age. The area's largest minority is African-American at 15.5% of the estimated 1991 population; in 1991, 8.9% of the population was Hispanic and 3% was of some other minority group.

Broward County has one of the fastest growing school systems in the nation with enrollment growing at the rate of 10,000 a year in recent years. It is also one of the larger districts in the nation. In 1994-95, Broward County schools served over 198,000 students. Large classrooms are typical in a rapidly growing system like this.

*"Broward County has one of the fastest growing school systems in the nation with enrollment growing at the rate of 10,000 a year in recent years."*

**Origin of Program**. In January, 1991, as Director of Plan for Social Excellence, a foundation founded by a fellow Pine Crest alum, Dr. Mario Peña discussed with William McMillan, president of Pine Crest School, the idea of expanding Pine Crest's summer enrichment program for minority students by developing similar sites at several other Fort Lauderdale independent schools. The focus this time would be on low income students of all ethnic backgrounds rather than just minori-

ties. The goal would be to serve Broward County's low income high school students who had potential to reach for a college education. Major funding would come from Plan for Social Excellence for the first three years with an increasing proportion of funds to come from local businesses and foundations each year until the fourth year when the programs would be locally sustained.

**First Steps**. After talking with Peña, McMillan approached the headmasters of three other local independent schools: James Meiste of Fort Lauderdale Christian School, Dr. James Byer of University School, and Dr. Kenneth Wackes of Westminster Academy. The three agreed to meet with McMillan and Dr. Lourdes Cowgill, headmistress of Pine Crest School, to explore the concept. Their initial meeting, on January 29, 1991, revealed enthusiasm and a good deal of consensus within the group about how the program should be developed.

At this initial meeting, the group decided to create "The Greater Fort Lauderdale Consortium of Independent Schools," as a vehicle for their cooperative work. They outlined a structure for a joint summer program as preparation for writing a proposal to Plan for Social Excellence.

These school leaders agreed that they wanted to provide a summer program of intensive education for students from low income families and that they would use Pine Crest's *Intensive Education for Minorities* program as their model. They wanted to emphasize mathematics usage and language skills, but they agreed to add other subjects which could vary at each location. They thought that some variation among programs as in the popular "magnet" style, would offer students choice and an opportunity to pursue personal interests. The group anticipated developing program sites at each campus.

The school heads identified the development directors of the four schools as appropriate people to supplement their own fundraising efforts as school heads. They thought they should seek help early on from the executive director of the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce.

*"The group decided to create 'The Greater Fort Lauderdale Consortium of Independent Schools,' as a vehicle for their cooperative work."*

McMillan agreed to coordinate the program while Cowgill, would officially represent that school.

McMillan and the others had been reluctant to set up a separate non-profit corporation, so the Consortium arranged with Plan for

Social Excellence for foundation monies to be conveyed to the group via Pine Crest School. The Consortium did structure itself formally via its Articles of Association, written in March, 1991.

### *The Consortium's Proposal*

On January 15, 1992, Plan for Social Excellence accepted the proposal that the Consortium had submitted to it the previous November. The Consortium was in business. The following paragraphs contain highlights of the consortium's proposal.

**Basic Elements and Structure**. Each campus would offer a six weeks summer enrichment program on the same days. The entire program including lunch and bus transportation would be without cost to the student. Each campus would hire three teachers plus a part-time administrator.

Each school expected to enroll about 24 students. The leaders believed that a low teacher/pupil ratio was an important strength of their program, permitting teachers to customize teaching techniques in response to the uniqueness of the student.

Each campus would offer math, English, and a third subject that would vary by the school. All schools would offer guidance about college applications and financial aid. The schools would also offer guidance services to the students during the winter months. To help with follow-up of program graduates, the Consortium planned to ask parents to have their student's transcript sent each year.

The Consortium planned to seek students of average or above average academic potential with the aim of helping them meet their full potential. The student's grades for the previous year would have to be a "C" average or above. The founders wanted to avoid a focus on remedial work with students who were not firm in the basics. Low income students entering the ninth through twelfth grades would be eligible. Applicants would need a recommendation from a guidance counselor, teacher or minister. Students would be sought who showed motivation as evidenced by good school attendance, evidence of parental support, and an eagerness to commit themselves to the program.

*"The Consortium planned to seek students of average or above average academic potential with the aim of helping them meet their full potential."*

The Consortium agreed to seek corporate funding at a minimum

level of 10% of program costs the first summer, 20% for the second summer, and 30% for the third summer. The Plan for Social Excellence grant came to a total of $270,000 to be dispersed at the rate of $90,000 a year for three years.

**Mission.** The heads of the four schools articulated their philosophical beliefs about sponsoring these summer programs. They believe that independent schools should also serve people who cannot afford to pay private school tuition. As non-profits, independent schools do not have to pay federal corporate income taxes or local property taxes. Also, donors to independent schools can deduct their donations in computing their tax bills. In this way, independent schools have indirect subsidies from the government and, thus, have a responsibility to contribute to the larger society.

These leaders noted that many economically disadvantaged teenagers live in Broward County and that many of that group were at risk of not meeting their academic potential. They hoped that these summer programs would enable students to come closer to reaching their capacities for academic achievement, perhaps by entering and completing college. They said that "any teenager whose mental potential is not fully developed represents a loss to society."

**Objectives**. The leaders described the purpose of the consortium as "providing a select group of economically disadvantaged high school students with an exposure to cultural, academic and social activities which should help prepare such students for college and serve as a motivation for them to attend." In the proposal, the school heads laid down the following specific objectives:

- To establish and develop linkages with the community in general and local high schools specifically;
- To provide exposure to a college atmosphere; to encourage and foster the desire for participation in higher education; and
- To provide an educational foundation and preparatory experience to assist in the enrollment process and adjustment to higher education.

*"Independent schools have indirect subsidies from the government and, thus, have a responsibility to contribute to the larger society."*

**Proposed Budget**. The budget submitted with the proposal contained line items for three teachers and one administrator at each site and transportation, lunch costs, student supplies, and facilities maintenance for each site. The budget also allotted funds for the production of a brochure and for direct mail and newspaper advertising. No funds were allotted for central staffing of the program.

**Consortium Schools' Financial Commitment**. In the proposal, the school leaders spelled out some administrative costs that they expected to absorb as their school's financial contribution to the project. Their rough estimate of these costs was an effort to illustrate ways that the schools would be making financial contributions to the program. They included administrative oversight by the school head and other administrative functions within each school such as accounting services, meeting expenses, supplies, and maintenance of facilities.

**Administrative Structure**. The project planning as expressed in the Articles of Association foresaw that the executive director, McMillan, who was president of Pine Crest School, would oversee the project, but his time was not accounted for in the budget or in the "sweat equity." Nor was his role mentioned in the proposal itself.

It was anticipated that each headmaster would contribute some time in administrative oversight because that time was accounted for in the "sweat equity" section of the proposal, and, also, the heads of schools were listed in the Articles of Association as the original consortium members.

There were no funds included to pay staff to work on fundraising in either the "sweat equity" section or in the budget. Discussion in the first January, 1991 meeting had brought out the idea of having each school's development director help each school's head raise the necessary corporate funds, but the development directors were not mentioned in the budget or in the sweat equity.

The proposal noted that the Consortium had not allotted a lot of money for advertising and explained that the planners reasoned that most of the recruitment would be done by contacts between each of the four schools and public school guidance counselors. (Recruitment had been handled in this way by the Pine Crest summer session for minority students.) The writer did go on to say that some of these contacts might be handled through the Consortium rather than by each school

*"The planners reasoned that most of the recruitment would be done by contacts between each of the four schools and public school guidance counselors."*

independently. No salary money was allotted specifically for recruiting and publicity, either in the budget or in the "sweat equity," leaving the implication that there would be little need for such tasks but, when needed, they would be done by either the executive director or each on-site administrator.

The grant-giving foundation, Plan for Social Excellence, had asked the Consortium to seek an endorsement of the program from the superintendent of schools and the Chamber of Commerce to indicate that these institutions were informed and that the Chamber would help raise funds in the corporate sector. The Consortium obtained letters expressing best wishes from each institution.

In summary, the details of the proposed budget have been delineated because what actually happened was different than what the leaders had anticipated and it is hoped that those considering similar programs might learn from this pioneering work of building a consortium among independent schools. For each school head, the concept of a consortium was new and, for three of the schools, the whole program concept was new as well, so these "pathfinders" were feeling their way and learning as they went along. Most of the school heads did not know each other well when they started out.

One aspect that was not highlighted in the budget or in the proposal, was the key role that McMillan would play in maintaining the Consortium. He was the center, the glue that kept the joint aspects of the project going. He maintained regular contact with the funders and he called the meetings and kept all participants abreast of what needed to be done next.

*"It is hoped that those considering similar programs might learn from this pioneering work of building a consortium among independent schools."*

# PROGRAMS AT THE FOUR SCHOOLS

This section moves directly from an overview of the Consortium founders' planning to the story of what actually happened in the classroom at each site. Here the focus is on the curriculum and materials used, classroom interaction, and teachers' observations. Each story is different, but here one can glimpse the heart of *Gain the Edge*. The material is taken from end-of-the-year reports and from telephone interviews with those teachers who were available to talk about the experience in the summer of 1995.

Although the overall framework within which these teachers constructed their lessons was similar in some ways, each setting brought some variety in emphasis, in teaching styles and in teacher personalities. These pages illustrate well that there is not just one effective way to teach. In each setting, teachers engaged their students in the process of learning and mastery in a way that fosters growth. Likewise, in many instances, the fruitfulness of the interaction stimulated the teachers, refreshed them in their vocation, and left them appreciative of the opportunity to have known and taught these students.

*"These pages illustrate well that there is not just one effective way to teach."*

### *Fort Lauderdale Christian School*

Fort Lauderdale Christian School, founded over forty years ago, is the oldest Christian school in Broward County. It has about 500 students from pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade. This parent-owned school is not affiliated with any one church or denomination. Located at 6330 NW 31st Avenue in Fort Lauderdale, it is just a few miles from Westminster Academy and Pine Crest School.

Fort Lauderdale Christian School held a summer camp for elementary students on its campus at the same time as *Gain the Edge*, but, according to one teacher, the younger children were so far away from the *Gain the Edge* program's upper school location that it was hard to realize that they were on the same grounds.

The leadership of Fort Lauderdale Christian School changed several times during the life span of the *Gain the Edge* program. James Lubbers was the program coordinator for Fort Lauderdale Christian School's *Gain the Edge* program for all three years. He taught mathematics in the winter school.

Meiste, who was principal in early 1992, introduced the *Gain the Edge* program to his faculty and invited teachers to apply for the summer jobs. Fort Lauderdale Christian had four teachers for each summer of the program, one of whom was Lubbers who taught math along with coordinating the program. Carol Mackey taught English. Byron Cox shared the math teaching with Lubbers and also taught horticulture and science. Rob Swetts was the first drama teacher. When he left for another school, Peg Gray took over as drama teacher.

**Planning**. Mackey said that the *Gain the Edge* staff at their school felt that the project was really teacher-driven. The teaching team worked together to plan the overall program. They structured the school day and they planned weekly field trips as enrichment experiences that would amplify the curriculum. Mackey said that in many ways *Gain the Edge* was "an educator's dream" because of the teamwork, the flexibility, and the opportunity to try a new curriculum or to teach what you love.

*"In many ways Gain the Edge was an educator's dream because of the teamwork, the flexibility, and the opportunity to try a new curriculum or to teach what you love."*

Mr. Cox said that the teachers made an effort to be on-site all day, even when they were not giving classes. They did this in order to focus

on relationship-building, an approach which is characteristic of Fort Lauderdale Christian School. The teachers ate lunch with the students regularly. Some students expressed surprise that the teachers stayed around after their teaching was finished.

In 1992, at the beginning of their program, Lubbers and the teachers established goals which they then followed in designing their program in each of the three years. The goals were as follows:

- To enhance the student's remaining high school experience by:
  - Helping the student capture/recapture the excitement of learning as a natural everyday experience;
  - Showing how material in standard coursework and the Fine Arts has an impact on real life needs and situations;
  - Encouraging the student to take pride in his/her work and hence help develop good personal work skills necessary in all vocations and professions; and
  - Helping the student discover intrinsic abilities and interests that are normally overlooked, ignored or covered up due to day-to-day pressures.
- To encourage the student to set personal goals and take concrete steps to plan for and gain entrance to college by:
  - Helping the students see themselves as college material due to their abilities, duties and desires;
  - Supplying information on specific colleges and general information on college entrance tests, applications and financial aid; and
  - Communicating to them the relevance of college for their future.

The following chart shows the number of students who attended the summer program at Fort Lauderdale Christian School. Each summer there were students who were entering each of the four high school grades in the fall.

| Enrollment at Fort Lauderdale Christian School Site | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Beginning | End |
| 1992 | 12 | 11 |
| 1993 | 13 | 13 |
| 1994 | 16 | 13 |

**English Class.** All of the students came to English class at once (and to science as well). Mackey thought that it worked well to have the different ages at the same time. Students of different ages helped each other out. Mackey would begin each summer by finding out the students' level in reading and writing.

The 1992 class read *Romeo and Juliet* and then did writing and art projects related to the play. Another year they read *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and then they wrote letters to Ms. Angelou. The students also wrote about their own childhood experiences and they tried their hand at writing poetry. Mackey introduced some poems that had been set to music and she played the music as well. She also had the students do journal writing.

For grammar study, Mackey put a grammatically-incorrect sentence on the board and asked the students to fix the grammar. She tried to put humor into the sentence and into the work. The class would sit in a circle for this exercise and make a game out of it. Mackey had developed this technique for her winter class to take some of the drudgery out of grammar work.

One year, Mackey had the students construct their own books. They bound them with cloth and used dental floss to sew them. The students were delighted; most made five books each and put their own writing inside.

One student whose family had immigrated from Egypt had tested very high in mathematics on his first SAT, but had a poor English score. The teachers arranged for him to replace math class with extra work in English vocabulary and SAT preparation with Mackey. The next time he took the SAT, that student's verbal score increased by 200 points.

*"The two math teachers used both traditional teaching strategies and computer applications."*

**Math Class.** The two math teachers divided students into two math groups according to their level. They used both traditional teaching strategies and computer applications in hopes of maximizing each

student's growth in understanding. In 1994, when many of the students were rising ninth graders, the teachers created a third group to meet the needs of two older students. The students also practiced math problems from sample SAT tests and learned problem-solving techniques for test-taking.

The math teachers went through different levels of math texts and chose topics that might not be covered in an ordinary math course. They introduced famous mathematicians and the concept that made the person famous. They went back to ancient Greeks such as Archimedes and they talked about the limited tools available to mathematicians in earlier centuries.

In one unit, the students applied trigonometry concepts to indirect measurement. They built a simple angle measuring tool which they then used to measure aspects of the environment such as the height of a church steeple and the width of a canal by triangulation. On a trip to Fort Lauderdale's Riverwalk, the students had a chance to see more sophisticated measuring instruments that were similar in concept such as the sextant, a tool which was used on sea-going ships in earlier days.

Realizing that engineering and architecture were two important ways to apply mathematics, Cox taught a bridge-building unit using a kit designed for the classroom (from Midwest Products in Hobart, Indiana). First, the students studied bridge design. Then each student made drawings and built a model bridge using small sticks from the kit. On the last day of class, everyone tested their bridge to see which would hold the most weight. Observers were impressed to see that some could support a bucket loaded with weights up to 50 lbs.! Discussion followed about the principles behind the relative strength of different bridges.

**Science**. One year, Thomas Altman, a well-known science educator, spent two days leading the students in hands-on science activities. Altman had been recognized in the state of New York for his teaching techniques, his writing, and the equipment he uses in his teaching of physics concepts.

In 1994, Cox taught a three week course on horticulture. The teachers had reasoned that nationwide, but especially in the warm, humid climate of South Florida, gardening was an important skill for professional use or for pleasure.

Agriculture is, of course, a big business in South Florida, including Broward County. Also, Cox teaches two life science courses and a horticulture course in the winter and has a strong personal interest in outdoor studies. He taught the *Gain the Edge* students about plant identification and about the growing of plants. He taught them about issues concerning the shrinking water supply in South Florida. They visited Fern Forest, a park in Fort Lauderdale which has only plants native to the area, those that existed before other "invasive" plants were introduced to the region. They also took field trips to Flamingo Gardens and to the Everglades.

**Business.** One year a Fort Lauderdale Christian School parent taught a course on business enterprise. Each student developed a stock portfolio with a fictional $10,000 and then used the newspaper and a spreadsheet to buy, sell, and track their stocks throughout the session. The teacher invited a representative from the Enterprise Ambassador program to talk to the class. Subsequently, one of the *Gain the Edge* students was accepted for the Ambassador program for the coming year...even though the deadline for applications had passed.

The parent who taught the business course arranged for the founder and CEO of Wendy's, Dave Thomas, to come and talk to the students. Afterwards, a student wrote a letter of appreciation to Thomas who responded by giving the student a year's scholarship to Fort Lauderdale Christian School, permitting the young man to do his senior year at that school. That student went on to become a full scholarship student at the University of Miami.

**College Applications.** The students knew very little about the college application process before the program began. Various aspects of the college application process were presented during the program.

At the 1992 picnic with Westminster, students heard a NationsBank staff person speak about how to apply for loans to finance college and how to establish credit.

A parent who was well-versed in the college and financial aid application process, and had written a booklet based on her experience, came each year to talk about things to consider when applying to college. She gave the students practical advice about how to use each year of high school to prepare for college application. At least four stu-

*"The students knew very little about the college application process before the program began."*

dents started a community service activity during the summer of 1992 after they had learned that colleges are interested in community service activities.

**Field Trips.** Field trips were an important part of Fort Lauderdale Christian School's program. In 1992, the group visited Motorola and the assembly plant of the *Sun Sentinel* to view computer-related vocations.

Each year the students went to Miami. The first year they toured the University of Miami and heard a talk by the admissions director there. The second and third years they visited museums and they traveled by public transportation. They took the TriRail commuter line to Miami and the MetroRail and Metro People Mover once there. Public transportation was a new experience for many of the students.

In the last two years, the students also toured the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Science and Discovery and the main building of the city's public library and, in 1994, they visited the Flagler Museum and Palm Beach Atlantic College in Palm Beach.

In 1993 and 1994, the group had two picnics with Westminster Academy, one at the beginning of the session and another at the end. In 1993, the boys and male faculty had a basketball competition with Westminster. The students in these two schools became well-acquainted because they shared bus transportation.

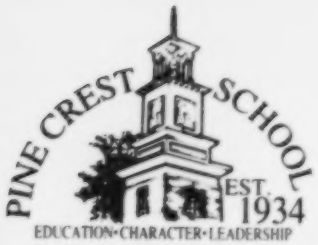
Towards the end of the 1994 session, the Fort Lauderdale Christian *Gain the Edge* students were interviewed by a *Sun Sentinel* reporter for a newspaper article and then they were interviewed again for the *Gain the Edge* video. The students worked carefully on their presentations. They were supportive to each other as they each had their moments at center stage. As a group, they had been enthusiastic participants all summer.

**Teachers' Comments.** In the end-of-the-year reports as well as in telephone interviews these teachers expressed a sense of pleasure and gratification in *Gain the Edge* work. Mackey said that she saw that during the program students really started to realize that they had potential to go to college if they wanted to do so and she said not all of the students realized that before. She noted that students developed friendships in the group because they spent so much time together. Near the end of the program, some students gave her a big hug and

*"These teachers expressed a sense of pleasure and gratification in Gain the Edge work."*

told her about their dismay that the program was ending. Mackey said that for her the program was "really rewarding."

Cox said that his imagination was stretched by working in *Gain the Edge*. He said that during the year a teacher is more tied to a fixed curriculum and doesn't have as much opportunity to look for new ideas; but, for the summer program, he and Lubbers reviewed a number of their texts and materials and he spent time in the library researching ideas for presentations. He thought he benefited as much as the students because he allowed his imagination to take off. He also liked the fact that there were no bells during the day and that because they were a small team of teachers they could adapt the schedule when there was reason to do so. Cox runs into former students occasionally and he is always happy to see them. He thinks *Gain the Edge* was a wonderful program and he has had "a tremendous three years."




### *Pine Crest School*

Pine Crest School was founded in 1933 and, in 1965, it moved to its present campus of 49 acres at 1501 NE 62nd street in Fort Lauderdale. Pine Crest is the second largest independent school in the continental United States with 1600 pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students on its Fort Lauderdale campus and 885 pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students on a second campus in Boca Raton. The Fort Lauderdale campus includes 130 boarding students.

*Gain the Edge* is just one of many summer programs at Pine Crest. There is also a day camp with more than 1,000 elementary-aged children, a residential swimming camp with 100 campers, a tennis camp, a dance group, a summer school for Pine Crest students, and a residential course for students who come from overseas to study English. Pine Crest also has a residential summer camp in North Carolina and the school sends a group of students to Europe during the summer.

*Gain the Edge* was preceded by and modeled upon a program called the *Intensive Summer Program for Minorities* that was begun at Pine Crest in 1978. Lee Turner who had been with the minority program since its inception in 1978, directed *Gain the Edge's* Pine Crest site in 1992. Turner then became principal of the upper school while Mr. Palmaccio, head of the math department, replaced Turner as assistant principal of the upper school and as program director of *Gain the Edge*. Palmaccio also taught mathematics in Pine Crest's regular summer school.

Pine Crest's program changed teaching staff in 1993. For 1993 and 1994, Jaimie Crawford taught English and drama and Angelina Thomas taught math. Crawford taught journalism in Pine Crest's Upper School in the winter and, in 1994, she also earned a master's degree in psychology. Thomas taught physics in the winter at Pine Crest, but she had taught math in previous years. The 1993 teachers talked with their 1992 predecessors for background about teaching methods used in prior years. A recent graduate of Pine Crest school helped the two teachers as a teaching assistant.

*"Gain the Edge was preceded by and modeled upon a program called the Intensive Summer Program for Minorities that was begun at Pine Crest in 1978."*

**Planning.** In 1993 and 1994, the teachers formed three groups for academic subjects, according to math course levels. Class rotation enabled the teachers to give each student a lot of individual attention.

| Enrollment at Pine Crest Site | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Beginning | End |
| 1992 | 12 | 7 |
| 1993 | 17 | 13 |
| 1994 | 19 | 15 |

Small classes particularly paid off for the SAT preparation.

In 1994, Crawford and Thomas met two weeks before the summer session to plan academic activities and outings. In 1993, the group had taken one field trip —to the Buehler Planetarium at Broward Community College. Responding to the students' feedback and their own evaluations as well, the two teachers planned three field trips for 1994 and linked them to the curriculum. The trips included a visit to the Museum of Science and Discovery in Fort Lauderdale, to the University of Miami where the group met with admissions personnel, and to the *Sun Sentinel*, Fort Lauderdale's largest newspaper. At the *Sun Sentinel*, they learned about internship possibilities and one of the students subsequently obtained an internship there. Some students also toured Broward Community College.

**English and Drama Curriculum**. The English classes focused a lot on vocabulary-building for the SAT. Crawford made flash cards with a picture from a magazine on each. On the back of each card, she put a list of synonyms explaining an idea illustrated in the picture. These cards worked well. They also used sample PSAT and SAT tests. As part of the SAT preparation, they worked on antonyms, analogies, and reading comprehension.

The students kept a journal. They did visualization writing and, to Crawford's pleasure, she found students using synonyms in their journal writing that they had learned in their vocabulary work.

The students had a lot of energy and enthusiasm which they were able to express in the drama section of the course. In 1993, they studied *Macbeth* and, in 1994, they did two of Shakespeare's comedies: *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Taming of the Shrew.* In each case, they developed six scenes that illustrated the play and presented them for McMillan, Pine Crest's president and *Gain the Edge's* executive director, other Pine Crest administrators, and their teachers. Crawford, the English teacher, said the students took to the Shakespearean language quite well. First, she had them read the plays

*"Class rotation enabled the teachers to give each student a lot of individual attention."*

in short story form. Then they read the plays in their regular text. Most of the students had already been introduced to Shakespeare in their winter schools. Crawford herself finds much pleasure in Shakespeare's plays and, no doubt, conveyed to the students her own love of the work.

In 1994, when the O.J. Simpson trial began, the classes read *Twelve Angry Men* to introduce a discussion of juries, defense and prosecution. That year Crawford led classroom discussions about emotions, a subject which drew the students' interest. A number of students knew people who had been shot and the class was able to have concerned and reflective discussion about these experiences.

**Mathematics Curriculum**. During the first week of the summer session, Thomas, the math teacher, sought information about topics students had covered in their home school. She looked for their strengths in math and she helped them pinpoint weak areas that needed review. With each student, she set a goal of what she would help them review to fill in the gaps in their skills and also in what areas she would help them to move ahead with new topics. She said, "we aimed to take one step back and two steps forward."

Student skills were quite variable. A couple of students came from the engineering magnet school. A few students who had already taken Algebra II were still weak in their integer skills; others had learned some skills in Algebra I or II or in Geometry, but they had areas within the subject that they did not yet understand. A few students were already strong in all of those subjects; they went directly to sample SAT tests and worked a lot on test taking strategies and practice. She helped them build skills in problem analysis. During the last week of the session, all math students worked on SAT practice.

Thomas said that when students filled in the gaps in their skills it relieved their "math anxiety." Those students who came for two or three summers gained particularly strong reinforcement of math skills.

*"With each student, she set a goal of what she would help them review to fill in the gaps in their skills and also in what areas she would help them to move ahead with new topics."*

For texts, Thomas was able to choose from a wide range of books that Pine Crest had on hand. She talked some with Pine Crest math teachers, asking about the newest math games to reinforce concepts since it had been several years since she had taught math. She made worksheets as well. In addition, she was able to give each student one

text to keep. She tended to give them a book that would support them in their next step in math at their home school.

**Teacher's Comments**. Thomas said that she likes using small groups to work with students who lack self confidence in their math skills, who need a "pat on the back" (individual attention, extra support and skill reinforcement). She said that she finds a great deal of satisfaction in watching students grow academically over the few weeks of the summer. She felt that in *Gain the Edge* she had achieved many small goals with students, helping them strengthen skills they hadn't mastered so that they wouldn't be stumbling when they went back to their home school.

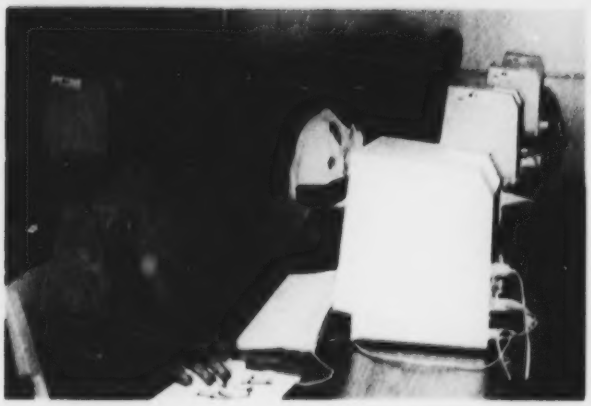
Thomas found the students to be well-behaved. Some were a bit shy and withdrawn. They might not speak up or demand attention and could easily get lost in a larger class. She said that when students lack confidence, they feel it is a weakness on their part to ask questions in class—to show that they didn't understand right away. She told the students that when they ask a question, they are helping their classmates as well because many other students might have the same question.

Thomas said that she and Crawford prepared a report on each student which they sent back to the guidance department in the student's home school. The report described the *Gain the Edge* course content, the student's attitude, and the student's achievements.

**Student's Comments.** Eduardo Merrero, a 1993 and 1994 student at the Pine Crest site, was, in the fall of 1995, a first year scholarship student at Nova Southeastern University. Eduardo said that in public high school he had attended a program for underachieving gifted students that was called "Dig-in." He thought that the *Gain the Edge* program was "really good. It sent me prepared. The classes were small and the teachers were great."

Eduardo praised Crawford's work with the English curriculum. He particularly remembered *The Taming of the Shrew*. The class performed a number of scenes from the play. Eduardo said that he remembers the play well because he thinks he and his friends were funny in their roles, and he has a memory of their having had fun together. He also said that it helped them understand the play when the teacher told them what life was like in Shakespeare's day. He

*"Eduardo Merrero thought the program was 'really good.' It sent me prepared. The classes were small and the teachers were great."*



added that the vocabulary work helped his writing skills and his SAT scores were 100 points higher than his PSATs.

Eduardo said that his *Gain the Edge* math classes were geared to the way students learn, i.e. by trying something, failing, and trying again. He said "you only learn by doing; for example, when you get up and do a problem at the board." The other kids in the *Gain the Edge* group were helpful to the student at the board. They would speak to him or her in kids' language. "It was a real group effort. Everyone tried to bring everyone else up." He said that while some teachers cut kids down in class if they don't know an answer, Thomas would bring the class into the discussion. She was more caring. Also, she didn't mind answering his questions about other math topics and she would show the class practical applications for problems they were studying. He added that, "she wasn't afraid to cut loose and we got to know her as a person." He said that, because she was open as a person, if he saw Thomas on the street in the future, he would be comfortable stopping to say hello and chat.

## *University School*

**University School.** University School is a subsidiary of Nova Southeastern University. Its main campus is located at Nova Southeastern University in the town of Davie in southern Broward County. The elementary and middle schools have a second campus at Coral Springs in the northern part of the county. University School is an independent day school with an enrollment of approximately 1,500 students in its early learning, elementary, middle school and high school programs. There are about 1,100 - 1,200 students at the Davie campus and about 350 in Coral Springs. University School is known for innovation and for the use of technology in teaching.

Nova Southeastern University is a private university created in 1994 (the last year of the *Gain the Edge* program) when Nova University (founded in 1964) merged with Southeastern University of the Health Sciences (founded in 1979), giving Broward County its first medical school. Nova Southeastern has a number of graduate schools, including the largest graduate teacher training program in the nation. In 1995, total university enrollment was about 13,600 students, of whom 32 percent were minorities.

Broward Community College is also located next door to Nova Southeastern University and the main campus of University School. *Gain the Edge* students at this site had a particularly rich exposure to higher education facilities since the school is surrounded by them.

Dr. James Byer, a former administrator at Pine Crest School, was headmaster of University School during the first two years of the *Gain the Edge* program. In June of 1994, he left Florida to become headmaster of The Hun School of Princeton in Princeton, New Jersey. Jay St. John took over as headmaster of University School.

Other summer programs taking place concurrently on University School campus included a small mathematics program for private and public high school students and a summer camp for elementary-aged children called *Camp Nova.*

**Transportation.** The *Gain the Edge* program at University School contracted with a transportation company to pick up students and bring them to the program. The same company transported children

*"University School is known for innovation and for the use of technology in teaching."*

who attended the school's day camp. Occasionally, when a *Gain the Edge* student lived close to the camp's bus route, that student would take the camp bus. One bus picked up students from widespread areas of the county which meant that the students would often be late to class.

**Program Planning.** Before *Gain the Edge* began, Byer called Nova to see if they had someone who did liaison work with minority groups. They referred him to Mrs. Eula Franklin-Jackson who was an academic advisor and minority student liaison. Byer discussed program design with her and she suggested some motivational and enrichment activities. Later on Franklin-Jackson joined the program to handle day-to-day administration at University School site. Ms. Winrow, head of University School's English department, and Mr. Scher, head of the math department, were also approached by Byer who asked them to teach in the *Gain the Edge* program.

Early on, Byer, Franklin-Jackson, and the teachers had several planning meetings. The group surmised that since the prospective students' home high schools were large ones, the students would not have had much personal attention to help them reach their academic goals. The staff decided to plan a curriculum focused on reading and math skills, on cultural enrichment, and on skills useful in applying to college. They delineated the following objectives:

- To establish and develop linkages with the community in general and local Middle Schools and High Schools specifically. These schools, along with community-based agencies and local churches provided referral sources;
- To provide exposure to a college atmosphere in order to encourage and foster the desire for participation in higher education;
- To provide an educational foundation and preparatory experience for college: to assist in the enrollment process and adjustment to higher education; and
- To provide a diverse multicultural environment for social and academic enrichment.

*"The staff decided to plan a curriculum focused on reading and math skills, on cultural enrichment, and on skills useful in applying to college."*

Before each year's session started, University School's *Gain the Edge* team had an orientation meeting with prospective students and their

parents. At that meeting, the teachers spoke about what they planned to do in the summer program. Winrow gave a handout with a list of novels including the ones she planned to teach. She asked the students to check-off the ones they had read as well as the ones they would like to read. She asked them to also list other books that they had read. In this way, she was able to get some idea of their skill and experience level to help in curriculum planning.

Enrollment at University School Site

| | Beginning | End |
|---|---|---|
| 1992 | 19 | 21 |
| 1993 | 23 | 21 |
| 1994 | 25 | 24 |

The teachers constructed two groups according to math level. They decided that, if necessary, Winrow could teach different levels of vocabulary, but it was most important to have math class operating at more or less the same level.

Sometimes they needed to teach at the individual level as well as at the group level. There was such a wide range of ability and experience levels among the students. Also, the bus scheduling was such a challenge that even though the school day was supposed to be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., some students didn't arrive until 9:55 a.m.. Therefore, the teachers started the day with individualized or large group activities while waiting for late arrivals. Some days they used warm-up questions or brain teasers as starters. Then they would divide into the two groups for math and English. In the afternoon, they might have a speaker. At other times, there might be four groups doing different activities: some in math class, some working at computers on an academic skills program, some working on vocabulary words, while others were analyzing a novel with Winrow.

**English Curriculum and Teaching Materials.** Winrow used several skill-building programs that she had tried in her winter classes. She used a guided reading and writing program from Education Utilities. It presented reading passages followed by vocabulary words and questions for work on comprehension. That program focused on five novels: *To Kill a Mockingbird, Call of the Wild, Animal Farm, Fahrenheit 451,* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* all books that are often taught in high school. Winrow ordered eight copies of each novel.

Each student was asked to read two books in six weeks. Each had to do a major thesis paper on one book. Each year the students did journal writing as well. The teachers did give homework and they got mixed reactions from the students about that.

Winrow used SRA 's reading lab, *Reading for Understanding, Lab III.* It covers ability levels from the seventh to the twelfth grades. The first part is a placement test. The kit includes cards with reading passages. Questions are asked about each passage with the aim of helping the student differentiate fact from opinion. The student answers the questions and then goes to the teacher for correction and self-analysis.

Winrow used Jamestown Publications' *Essential Skills* which presented social studies topics. The program teaches the student about supporting detail, conclusions, and clarification of subject matter. It includes timed readings which students can use to increase their reading speed while retaining and improving comprehension.

In 1993, the students were somewhat younger than in 1992 and some were not ready to read novels. University School's assistant librarian came to teach library skills for two days. She gave the students a library tour. Each student chose a few books to read. They later wrote summaries of the books. The students saw three movies that year: *Willow, The Mouse That Roared,* and *North by Northwest* , and the class discussed and wrote about the films. The class used the Education Utilities grammar program to work on a variety of grammar skills.

**Volunteer Teacher.** In 1994, the program was blessed with a volunteer who, in effect, became a third teacher. His presence meant that the program could offer three classes (math, English, and computers) and could, therefore, divide the students into three groups for their academics. The volunteer, a pre-med student at the University of Miami, had previously worked in the computer industry and had several other relevant skills as well. At *Gain the Edge*, he taught a computer lab, gave a CPR demonstration, and served as lifeguard. In 1994, the teachers focused on whole group activities the first week so that the new volunteer would have a chance to observe the other teachers' classroom skills in action.

*"The building of skills for PSAT, SAT, and TOEFL test-taking were important aspects of University School program."*

**College Application Process.** The building of skills for PSAT, SAT, and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test-taking were

important aspects of University School program. By and large, the students did not have experience with these tests—and their interest in learning more about them was a big factor in their decision to come to this program.

They used PSAT and SAT books with practice tests. Winrow obtained some tests from previous years from University School's guidance department. Also, as department chair, she had received, from publishers, exam copies of books with practice tests in them. She gave one to each student. They worked individually; then they paired up and tested each other. Sometimes the students made their own materials in a fun way. For the TOEFL, they obtained some sample dictation tapes and they did practice tests.

All of the eleventh and twelfth grade students practiced all aspects of the college application. First, Winrow had them write a general letter to a college, asking for information and an application. She explained that after receiving the letter the college would open a file on them. Nova Southeastern's admissions office gave them copies of the general application form and each student filled one out. They talked about the importance of telling about their activities, their leadership, their jobs, etc. They brainstormed to think about unusual and interesting activities. They each wrote a sample personal essay for their own "portfolio," so they had something tangible and useful to keep after the program.

**Other Program Features.** In 1992, in a celebration of diversity, this *Gain the Edge* program had luncheons from different ethnic cultures twice a week. In this way, different group members shared their family cuisine's and learned about home-cooking of fellow classmates. The group also held two cookouts and pool parties, one at the beginning and one at the end of the session.

Educational field trips in 1992 included the art museum, college campus tours, multicultural exhibits, the planetarium, and the Museum of Science and Discovery. Multicultural-cultural videos were shown and followed by discussions and interaction sessions. Recreational and social events included a trip to a theme park, ice skating, miniature golf, and movies. Some students had never been to such local institutions as the art museum or the Atlantis water park.

*"Educational field trips in 1992 included the art museum, college campus tours, multicultural exhibits, the planetarium, and the Museum of Science and Discovery."*

In 1992, the students developed skits on the theme of "Success." For the skits, the teachers divided the students into heterogeneous groups so that they worked together with classmates of different ages, sex, and ethnic groups. (Though the majority of students were African-American, the group also included students from other nations.) Each group developed a presentation about what success meant to its members. The students performed this program at Awards Night at the end of the session. Through activities like these, the student group grew in its capacity to build friendships with classmates from different cultural backgrounds.

For the first two years, Byer presented a workshop on college admissions. Nova University's admissions office sent a speaker each of the three years. Other 1992 speakers from Nova conducted workshops of 2-2 1/2 hours on such topics as Time Management, Study Skills, Goal Setting, and Test Taking. In 1993, Professor Cleveland, an African-American faculty member from Broward Community College, gave a motivational talk about going to college. Multicultural-cultural videos were shown and followed by discussions and interaction sessions. A speaker led a discussion about self-esteem.

Field trips in 1993 included the Museum of Discovery and Science, a walking tour of the many facets of the Nova campus, a walking tour of Broward Community College which is next door to University School, and a walking tour of the Miami Dolphins training camp at Nova Southeastern University. (In fact, the students had a view of the Dolphins from their computer room window, an attraction which was one more reason they liked *Gain the Edge*.) In 1993, the students were interviewed by the *Miami Herald* for an article about the program.

Because of cost and logistics, the group did fewer field trips and more campus activities in 1994, but they did go again to the Museum of Science and Discovery with its IMAX theater. They also repeated the campus tours of Nova Southeastern University and Broward Community College and of the Miami Dolphins training camp. The program's full-time volunteer led CPR, first aid, and swimming demonstrations. Mr. Jay St. John, University School's new headmaster, came to speak as did two former *Gain the Edge* students who were about to begin their first

year at Nova Southeastern University. Successful on-campus activities from the previous two years were repeated. The students held competitions, played academic games, and made their own video. They seemed well-satisfied with the on-site approach.

**Teacher's Comments.** Winrow stressed that it is important for teachers in a program like this to be flexible. She noted that each year they had groups of students whose abilities and strengths covered a wide range. Teachers need to be ready to adapt their curriculum and their methods to the individuals who come to them.

Winrow said that she had been hesitant at first about giving up so much of her summers to teach in *Gain the Edge*, but that the experience had definitely been worth it. The students write and tell her that she helped them. One said she wasn't happy with her PSAT results, so she studied her vocabulary before taking the SAT and did much better, just like *Gain the Edge* had taught her.

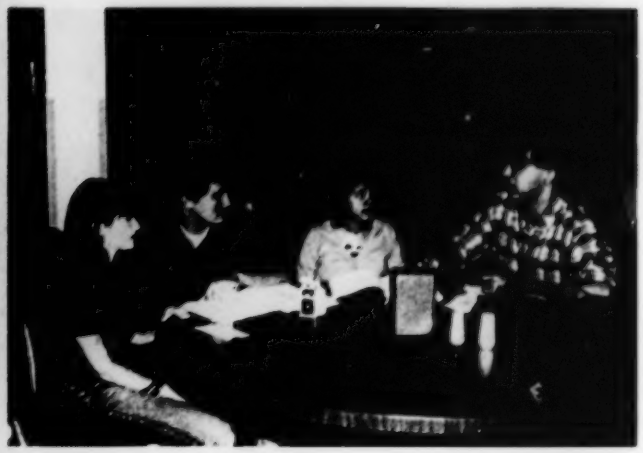
Winrow also said, "The program gave me an opportunity to be involved with students that I never would have met otherwise. I like to help people. I know I made an impact on their lives. They certainly did on mine. These students were such nice people and they were so appreciative. It was really wonderful for me."

**Student Comments.** Jamilah Green, who attended the University School site of *Gain the Edge* in 1992 and 1993, remembers the program as having been fun at the same time that it was helpful in math, in English and in preparing for SATs. This young woman is now a pre-law student in her second year at Nova University and was attracted to Nova partly by the experience of studying on the campus as a teen and partly by the scholarship that Nova offered to graduates of the *Gain the Edge* program. These scholarships are renewable annually as long as the student maintains a good grade point average.

*"Jamilah Green was attracted to Nova partly by the experience of studying on the campus as a teen and partly by the scholarship that Nova offered to graduates of the Gain the Edge program."*

Jamilah noted that the *Gain the Edge* program was her first experience in a culturally diverse learning environment—and it was a successful one. She was happy to meet students whose families came from many different countries and she still keeps in touch with a few of them. One of her classmates from *Gain the Edge* is in her law class at Nova.

Her classmate, Vu Quoc Huynh, attended *Gain the Edge* at University School in 1993. He, like Jamilah Green, was a sophomore



on scholarship at Nova Southeastern University in the fall of 1995, and he also said that he was positively influenced towards Nova Southeastern by the experience of being on campus for the *Gain the Edge* program.

Vu Quoc Huynh and his family came to the United States from Vietnam in 1991, so he was particularly appreciative of the opportunity to learn about the college application process and to obtain help in reading and in English vocabulary-building. He, too, appreciated the chance to make friends with students from many different backgrounds. Huynh is a pre-med student with a 3.8 grade point average. He felt that it was helpful that *Gain the Edge* was free to students; he said the program encourages him and other low income students in their studies because it feels like somebody cares about them.

Another student who is still in high school attended University School site of *Gain the Edge* in 1993 and 1994. He said he would have returned in 1995 if the program had continued at University School, but that he didn't have transportation to Pine Crest, the only remaining site. He had been signed up to take geometry in the tenth grade, but after his first summer with *Gain the Edge*, he passed a test back at his home school and was able to take honors Geometry in the tenth grade. That student said that if even one student didn't understand a math problem, Scher took the time to go over the problem again for that student. Scher's patience and responsiveness were very much appreciated.

### *Westminster Academy*

Westminster Academy is an independent day school offering classes from pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade with a total enrollment of approximately 1,000 students. It is located at 5620 NE 22nd Avenue in Fort Lauderdale. The upper school has about 300 students in the ninth through twelfth grades. Westminster Academy is affiliated with the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, a large and well-known evangelical church in Fort Lauderdale. In 1995, the church had about 7,000 members and its pastor, Dr. D. James Kennedy, was known for his Sunday morning television show.

In the summer, in addition to *Gain the Edge*, Westminster held a summer camp on its campus for elementary-aged children.

**Transportation.** Westminster Academy shared bus transportation with Fort Lauderdale Christian School which was located a few miles away.

**Choosing of Teachers.** Thomas Fagley, the technology coordinator at Westminster Academy, served as program director for their *Gain the Edge* program. In the winter of 1992, Fagley met with school staff to tell them about *Gain the Edge*. At that time, he invited interested teachers to apply. The teachers chosen were experienced Westminster faculty members. Each teacher worked more or less independently of the others except when they met to jointly plan field trips. They had regular access to Fagley for consultation and feedback.

**Planning.** Westminster divided its *Gain the Edge* students into two groups according to grade. They found that this was a natural grouping that reflected both social and academic maturity. The first year they had more eleventh and twelfth graders than other grades; the second year, the numbers were more spread out, and the third year there was a preponderance of ninth graders. Programming was affected by the age groups: the first year there was more emphasis on SAT preparation. Critical thinking skills were always an important part of the curriculum, but they became increasingly so each year.

*"Critical thinking skills were always an important part of the curriculum, but they became increasingly so each year."*

At Westminster, the teachers structured the day with four classroom periods running from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., each period lasting an hour and ten minutes. Each year the program included a daily period

| Enrollment at Westminster Academy Site | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Beginning | End |
| 1992 | 7 | 14 |
| 1993 | 9 | 14 |
| 1994 | 16 | 19 |

of English and mathematics. The courses given in the third and fourth periods varied somewhat each year. Also, a number of short courses were taught. As a result, quite a few different teachers were involved at Westminster Academy.

1992 courses included four weeks of humanities (history focus), four weeks of Fine Arts (speech and art, each for two weeks), and a four weeks equivalent of computer (word processing, data base).

In 1993, the third and fourth periods included two weeks of computer (word processing which was then used to write a newspaper for English class), four weeks of environmental science (focus on land and ocean eco-systems), and six weeks of Humanities and Fine Arts (two weeks each of drama, art and U.S. History).

In 1994, three weeks were spent on environmental science (world's oceans, river basins, sand, soil, minerals), three weeks on computers (database and spreadsheets), and six weeks on humanities (drama, art and psychology).

**Goals**. Robert Joynt, the history teacher, said that Fagley set clear goals for the teachers. He told them that the students should be accountable for their work. They should gain new knowledge and be stimulated academically. While the program should not be academically exhausting, it should be enriching so that participating students would have an edge over their classmates when they returned to their schools in the fall. They should leave being able to compete well academically.

**Classroom Atmosphere.** Joynt said that his students plunged right in and got involved in classroom discussion. He said that he was excited to have the chance to teach this class. He thinks that his excitement was contagious; the kids felt it and responded with enthusiasm on their part. He thinks that many students return for a second summer because they liked the first.

The teachers at Westminster found that they ran a student-centered classroom. They had a good idea of what they wanted to teach before the course began, but they were prepared to be flexible. They sometimes didn't know the composition of their classes until late in the first week because new students kept arriving. They spent the first few days informally assessing students' entering skills by asking for writing samples, doing vocabulary work, and giving some informal math tests. They used that time to gauge the level of students' preparation and to adjust their curriculum accordingly.

Westminster teachers found their students to be motivated, respectful, solidly skilled in the basics, and good students, though most were not veterans of the honor roll. Some were not achieving to their capacity back at their winter high school; none were failing. Most had hopes of going to college.

The teachers wondered how the students would feel coming to an independent school campus to study with an all-white faculty. They found that the students liked the campus and they seemed to appreciate the warm, caring attitude of the teachers. Ms. Wozniak, the English teacher, observed that when the students perceived that their teachers cared about each of them as individuals, they started believing more in their own academic capacities. In that way, a lot of confidence-building took place. She thinks that when the students entered the course, although some were social leaders in their own schools, cheerleaders and football players, for example, none were academic leaders. She felt that the students grew significantly in their academic confidence and that their grades the following semesters in their home school showed that.

Most of the students were African-American, though there were other minorities as well. There were Hispanic students and others whose families were recent immigrants from around the world. The students blended well and they seemed to enjoy the diversity.

Wozniak, like Joynt, said she thought the students sensed that the teachers enjoyed working with them and the students responded, in kind, by enjoying their relationship with their teachers. They respected the teachers' authority, but they also corrected each other if one of them got "out-of-line." There was mutual respect and mutual enjoyment between teachers and students.

*"The teachers at Westminster found that they ran a student-centered classroom."*

Wozniak said that she thought the small groups developed a cohesion and spirit of their own. Students were supportive, open and giving with each other. Students developed solid friendships and the group became almost like a family during the session. Some students came from the same high school, so they were able to continue their friendships during the winter. Quite a few students returned for several summers.

**English class.** In English class, teachers and students talked together about informal language of various subcultures. They would find analogous phrases in formal English to phrases in the students' home language. African-American students talked about how they could switch between their home language and formal English according to their situation. Wozniak talked with the students about the dilemmas that the existence of the two languages can pose for an English teacher who would like to acknowledge and affirm the students' home language while teaching the more formal language of the wider culture.

For SAT vocabulary building, Wozniak used a set of large cards that had the featured word with a picture on one side and the definition plus a sample sentence on the other side. She gave each student eight of these cards to learn. Small groups competed to see which group knew the most words. The students competed in a good-natured, fun way and loved it. The students liked the high-energy, non-traditional classroom with a lot of interaction. Wozniak also asked the students to use the dictionary, find words they didn't know, and make up their own cards for the next go round.

Students did a lot of journal-writing to develop their confidence. In the process, they learned that they had something to say that was important.

In the first year, Wozniak taught the classics using the Great Books program, an approach that was primarily curriculum-driven and directed to imparting information. In the second and third years, Wozniak focused more on developing critical thinking. She turned to more contemporary literature in an effort to relate the readings more closely to student interests. The underlying goal was always to help students further develop their higher order thinking skills.

*"The underlying goal was always to help students further develop their higher order thinking skills."*

At the end of the summer session, the English classes developed their own talent show. They performed readings, songs and skits.

They wanted to work in groups and they supported each other. They invited their parents.

**Gains**. Wozniak felt that the students thrived because success was built in to the program. No one was going to fail and the students sensed that. They also knew they had to contribute. They did and they loved it. The program was flexible enough to meet these young people where they were and to move them forward. The students had a positive feeling about the program and they had a strong sense of belonging. There was a multicultural-cultural atmosphere.

Wozniak said that in the larger setting of their regular high school, students would not let it be known when they didn't understand something in the classroom. It was a matter of social pride and part of the high school culture. At *Gain the Edge*, the students knew it was okay to admit to not knowing something and that was a key ingredient for comprehending the material and moving forward.

**History Class.** Joynt taught history and psychology courses for *Gain the Edge*. He is the head of the history department at Westminster Academy. He also teaches a history course at Broward Community College.

In the first summer, Joynt shared the social studies course with Professor Maddox from Broward Community College. Professor Maddox, a sociology professor, taught the *Gain The Edge* students the history of Egypt during the Golden Age. He also taught a unit about the African-American family in the 1800s and the 1900s, with emphasis on the strengths of African-American families and challenges that they have had to master at different points in time. Joynt sat in on these classes and then continued with the subject of African-American history for his three weeks.

In 1993, Joynt taught about the lives of northern and southern African-Americans before, during and after the Civil War. He taught about post-Civil War laws that particularly affected African-Americans—such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board Education*. With the goal of showing that African-Americans were not the only group to be persecuted, Joynt taught about the 1942 Japanese Relocation Act in this country and the treatment of the Jewish people in Nazi Germany.

*"Students knew it was okay to admit to not knowing something and that was a key ingredient for comprehending the material and moving forward."*

Field trips were designed to complement classroom work. In 1993, the group made a field trip to the Holocaust Museum at Miami Beach and to the South Florida Historical Museum. At the Holocaust Museum, the students listened to a rabbi who had been on one of the first military teams to enter the German concentration camps in April of 1945. The rabbi told the students that a African-American regiment had entered the camp alongside his group. A survivor of the Treblinka camp also spoke to them. That day the group went on to see an exhibit of the African-American baseball leagues at the South Florida Historical Museum.

Joynt said that the African-American history he taught was new to about half of the students. Some knew much of it, but others did not. He said that one father called to praise him and was surprised to hear that Joynt was not African-American.

Joynt said that some of his own interest in African-American history came from stories told to him by his step-grandfather who had been in the Spanish-American war. His grandfather had told him that experienced African-American troops fought in the battle of San Juan Hill and that it was due to the 11th and 12th Colored Infantry that the United States won that battle. Joynt also told his students about the "Buffalo Soldiers," African-American troops who were sent to the West to fight the Indians after the Civil War.

In 1994, Joynt asked the students whether they would like to spend their three weeks with him studying more African-American history or doing a unit on psychology. They chose psychology. He gave the topic a broad sweep, focusing on basic general psychology, on behavioral, and on abnormal psychology, briefly describing major types of illnesses. The group went to visit a mental health clinic and they had a guest speaker.

Joynt said that he saw that it was important for the teacher to be ready to move with the pace of the group, to have the flexibility to speed up or slow down. He felt he didn't really teach to the individual, but that he sought the center of these small groups and paced himself accordingly. He felt that since history was taught for only a portion of the six weeks session, the time he had was not enough to get to know the students well as individuals. On the other hand, some students came back for a second summer, so over time he got to know

those young people. He also met parents at the picnics at the beginning and end of the course and this helped him to know the students.

He is delighted when he sees a former student in a mall and the student remembers him and his course. Joynt felt that teaching in *Gain the Edge* was a privilege in that it was an opportunity to interact with the larger community, something that he values.

**Art Class.** Nancy Tiedje started her career as a public school art teacher and then stopped teaching for fifteen years. In 1990, she came back to teaching as the upper school art teacher at Westminster Academy. She had maintained her own artistic work during her absence from teaching.

Tiedje taught art at *Gain the Edge* all three years for the first two weeks of each session. Each year she had time to do one major project with the students. She chose her focus with the idea that most of the students did not necessarily have artistic ability, but she wanted them all to feel successful in their art work. She also hoped the projects would help the students to grow in their capacity for introspective thinking. Many of the students had not taken an art course before.

For the first two years, Tiedje did a project in which she divided a 2′ x 3′ poster (one year it was a tropical fish) in sections and cut it up, giving each student one of the sections. All students were asked to reproduce their section, doubled in size, without looking at the work of their fellow students. Each student worked with just one grid. The project involved mathematics since the students doubled the proportions. They worked with oil pastels, so they learned to use that medium, sometimes changing the color tone. When the students had finished their enlargements, the class mounted them on the board, section by section. As each piece of the puzzle was put into place, the enthusiasm from the audience of students mounted. Tiedje said that the students did an excellent job. She found that this project was also good for developing group cohesion.



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**Field Trips**. The Westminster faculty planned field trips to supplement in-class teaching. In 1992, for the computer course, the students visited the Motorola Company in Palm Beach and the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel's* computer-controlled robotics assembly lines where the newspaper is put together. As a part of the art course, the group traveled to Miami to visit the Vizcaya Museum, a mansion built in 1916 for John Deere which was, in 1952, turned into a museum to display home furnishings representative of different periods in history—from the days of the Roman Empire up to the nineteenth century.

In 1993, the Westminster students went to Miami to visit the Holocaust Museum and the South Florida Historical Museum for their history course. Next, the group took an air boat ride and had a lecture in the Everglades National Park as an enrichment activity for the environmental science course. The students also went to the Flagler Museum in West Palm Beach in connection with their art work.

In 1994, the group went to Vizcaya Museum in Miami. For the science course, the group visited Fort Lauderdale's Museum of Science and Discovery to see the great mammals exhibit and the IMAX Theater film on the Grand Canyon. They also took the tour boat which travels Fort Lauderdale's intracoastal waterway and stops at an island with exhibits about Florida's Seminole Indians. The students went to Miami a second time, taking the commuter train down and the Miami People Mover Loop to get around the city. While there, they visited the Miami Museum of Arts and Science and the Bayside Market Place.

**Cookouts.** In 1992, Westminster Academy group had two barbecues at Fort Lauderdale Christian School. The Pine Crest site students joined them for the second outing. At the first picnic, a NationsBank employee talked about the banking industry and about how to establish credit and apply for college loans. In 1993 and 1994, Westminster *Gain the Edge* students again linked with those from Fort Lauderdale Christian School for picnics at the beginning and end of the program. In 1993, these two groups competed in a boys basketball game with both students and faculty playing.

*"At the first picnic, a NationsBank employee talked about the banking industry and about how to establish credit and apply for college loans."*

**Student Stories**. A number of Westminster students kept in contact and expressed their appreciation for the program. One student took part in an Advanced Placement Art course at his home school. He is quite talented in art. Tiedje invited him to visit her winter art class to show his work and to tell those students about the AP Art Course since

Westminster did not have one at that time. He came, spoke to the group and did a fine job. *Gain the Edge* helped him with the college application process. He was accepted at his first choice, the University of South Florida, where he is studying computer programming with a focus on software for graphics and computer assisted design.

A female student who came two summers was accepted into her first choice, the University of Florida. Her mother wrote in appreciation, saying that she felt *Gain the Edge* had made the difference in her daughter's acceptance into the university. The young woman is majoring in biology with the aim of becoming a dentist.

Another young woman took part in the Westminster program all three years. She came to *Gain the Edge* with strong social skills that led her to become cheerleading captain at her high school, but she said that *Gain the Edge* gave her the confidence and the motivation to succeed academically. She attributes her good SAT scores to the impact of her summer studies at Westminster Academy.

## *Highlights From The Four Schools*

One idea that comes through repeatedly in the stories of the work in these four schools' sites is that when the teachers taught what they loved, the message to the students about developing a sense of pleasure in learning was reinforced. The students saw the teachers experiencing pleasure in their subject and in the sharing of knowledge. This sense of pleasure in subject matter came through when Crawford talked about Shakespeare, when Joynt talked about history, when Cox talked about horticulture and in many other instances as well. Mackey said that *Gain the Edge* was "an educator's dream" because of teamwork, flexibility, and the opportunity to teach what you love.

Similarly, when the teachers were happy to be with their students, the students felt that happiness. Wozniak and other Westminster teachers said that when the students sensed their teachers' pleasure in working with them, the students responded in kind by enjoying their relationship with their teachers. Winrow said that she was sure she made an impact on her students' lives and she was just as sure that they made a positive impact on hers. Thomas spoke of the pleasure she feels when she thinks about the fact that she has achieved many small goals with her students, helping them strengthen their skills and giving them extra support to encourage them to believe in their abilities. Tiedje told how she aimed to help students feel successful in their art work and she wanted to help them grow in their capacity for introspective thinking.

It is easy to conclude from the above testimony that *Gain the Edge* succeeded in communicating a love of learning and an appreciation of teaching to many of the students who took part. The small, flexible classroom setting with a teacher-driven curriculum paced to the students' levels and rates of learning were key factors.

*"It is easy to conclude from the above testimony that Gain the Edge succeeded in communicating a love of learning and an appreciation of teaching to many of the students who took part."*

These teachers also often planned lessons that engaged their students in interaction or active learning. There were math problems to be solved at the board, competitions in vocabulary-building, drama skits and other oral presentations. The relaxed, often playful, classroom atmosphere gave the students permission to let down their overly grown-up reserve and to act their age or younger while still being actively engaged in the learning process, behavior that is not usually possible in the large classrooms of public high schools. Also, this change-of-pace during the day must have been important for keeping attention in often lengthy class periods on a long summer's day.

One teacher noted that the caring atmosphere and the individual attention in *Gain the Edge* classes permitted students to let down their guard and acknowledge their bewilderment when they didn't understand what was being taught in contrast to the teen culture in their home schools, an atmosphere in which students might be harsh with their classmates who admitted a lack of understanding. The teacher observed that when students could admit their confusion about a subject being taught, they were then better able to absorb the material and move ahead in their learning.

These stories indicate also that when guest speakers came to visit *Gain the Edge* classes, they sometimes went away inspired to give something to the program. At Fort Lauderdale Christian, this happened when the founder of Wendy's gave a scholarship to a *Gain the Edge* student who had impressed him. It also happened at Fort Lauderdale Christian when a speaker came from the Enterprise Ambassador program. That speaker later helped a *Gain the Edge* student gain acceptance for the next Ambassador program. When Pine Crest went to visit the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, one student applied for an internship there and achieved it. People often search for ways to contribute to the youth of their community; this program provided that opportunity for some who came in contact with it.

*"People often search for ways to contribute to the youth of their community; this program provided that opportunity for some who came in contact with it."*

# THE CONSORTIUM'S JOINT FUNCTIONS

This section reviews the joint aspects of the Consortium's work. The *Gain the Edge* project is characterized by an interplay of independence and joint action by the participating schools.

Some aspects of the project became more shared after the first year. In 1992, when the project was just getting on its feet, the Consortium lacked some of the infrastructure needed for joint participation. As a remedy, in 1993 the group initiated a committee structure for the recruitment and fundraising functions. The schools also pulled the recruitment efforts together under the leadership of Franklin-Jackson. Subsequently, the shared work increased.

## *Publicity*

One of the first things McMillan did after he heard that the Consortium's grant was approved was to ask Gary Butts, Pine Crest's Development Director to help with corporate solicitation, and to ask Patty Camp, Pine Crest's Alumni Secretary and a staff person with strong design skills, to work on publicity for the *Gain the Edge* program. On January 24, 1992, the three met to begin work on publicity. Publicity was important for recruitment and fundraising, both of which needed to get going quickly in order to prepare for the 1992 summer session.

This section will focus on the activities and the evolution of publicity for the project over three years, but the reader should remember that publicity was always intertwined with recruitment and, to some extent, with fundraising. Publicity remained in Camp's hands for the first year, but in the second and third years the responsibility was shared with staff from other schools after the creation of a committee system.

**Press Releases and Newspaper Articles**. As an initial public relations step, Camp composed a press release about the grant and the *Gain the Edge* program. The release identified the amount of the grant, its purpose, the four independent schools involved, the minimum matching funds needed from business, and the plan of working with guidance counselors to recruit students. The publicity team sent the press release to eight South Florida newspapers. Other press releases

*"The Gain the Edge project is characterized by an interplay of independence and joint action by the participating schools."*

were made during the three years of the program, typically one during recruitment season and one at the end of the session.

The 1992 press releases led to one mention of the *Gain the Edge* program in a local newspaper's late May listing of 1992 summer program choices for students. In October of 1992, a *Miami Herald* education writer devoted a few paragraphs of a longer column to reporting on the success of *Gain the Edge's* first year.

In 1993, the *Miami Herald*, on May 9th, devoted an article in its North Broward edition to the *Gain the Edge* program. That was a timely date as it was during the recruitment period. During the summer of 1993, the *Miami Herald* mentioned University School site in an article telling about many summer programs. On July 12, 1993, a *Miami Herald* staff writer did a feature article on *Gain the Edge* with quotations from students.

On June 1, 1994, the program was mentioned in another well-timed listing of summer opportunities. Finally, on August 22, 1994, after the third summer session was over, the Fort Lauderdale *Sun Sentinel* devoted a feature article with three versions (for different zones) to *Gain the Edge*, each version including quotations from students at a different project site.

**Recruitment Brochures.** Since early in 1991, during initial stages of grant preparation, the four school heads had viewed the program as consisting of four curricula that were somewhat different and, therefore, needed to be presented individually so that the prospective student could choose the one that was the most personally appealing. Therefore, it followed that the recruitment brochure would include a description of each school's offerings as well as an overview and practical information about how to sign up.

*"The Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel devoted a feature article with three versions to Gain the Edge, each version including quotations from students at a different project site."*

Camp designed a 6" x 9" pocket folder plus eight insert sheets for each folder. The inserts included the program overview, a separate sheet for each school's program, an application form with a parental waiver for insurance purposes, a medical information sheet, and a form to be filled out by the student's guidance counselor.

A local firm owned by a Pine Crest School parent printed the recruitment packet in 1992. That firm donated $1,700 of a total cost of $2,900 for printing the packet and some consortium stationery. In 1992, the recruitment packets were also used for fundraising.

In 1993, Camp designed a separate brochure for fundraising purposes. She also redesigned the cover for the recruitment packet because the original artwork had been lost. The redesign process permitted insertion of Franklin-Jackson's name and telephone to replace the four heads of schools as a central contact person for applicants and it permitted the listing of the new head of Fort Lauderdale Christian School. One printer produced consortium stationery, the fundraising brochure, recruitment packets, and 6" x 9" envelopes for the packets and the brochure. That printer donated $3,700 of the total cost of the printing.

In 1994, enough publications remained from 1993 so that only a few inserts for the recruitment packet needed to be updated and reprinted.

**Newspaper Advertising**. In 1992, the consortium paid for advertising in *El Heraldo de Broward* and for a targeted insert ad in the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*.

**Direct Mail.** In 1993 and 1994 committees had been set up for both recruitment and fundraising with the result that Camp had help with publicity. In 1993, Nate Larkin, the president of Fort Lauderdale Christian School, wrote a letter telling his personal story of rising above poverty to go to college with the help of some generous people that he didn't know. This letter was sent in a targeted mailing by a mailing house. They used a mailing list of 1,441 low income families with children between the ages of 13 and 17 years. The letter generated many telephone calls.

**Posters**. Larkin also had a four-color poster developed to be sent to libraries, churches, schools, and businesses. The design of the poster cost $650, but $400 of that amount was donated by the designer. The printer donated $300 of the $680 cost of printing the large posters.

**Radio**. Jim Brown, the development director at Westminster Academy and a member of the Fundraising Committee, made a public service announcement during his radio program on a local Christian radio station in the late afternoon for a week late in May. He also arranged for the announcement to be on "Selkirk's Community Bulletin Board," another program on the same station.

*"The consortium paid for advertising in El Heraldo de Broward and for a targeted insert ad in the Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel."*

### *Recruitment*

As the Consortium founders explained in their grant proposal, they anticipated that most of the recruiting for *Gain the Edge* would occur

with public school guidance counselors as had happened for Pine Crest's smaller program, the *Intensive Summer Program for Minorities*, a three week program that had taught up to 20 students a summer.

Thus, the first effort for recruitment was the preparation of the recruitment packet which was then sent with a letter of explanation to all 49 public middle school and high school principals with extra packets sent for the guidance departments. The letter and packet went out on April 15, 1992. On May 15, a similar letter and packet was sent to private and parochial schools.

When applications had just begun to come in by mid-May, project leaders were understandably concerned. It was after the middle of May that the consortium turned to newspaper advertisements in *El Heraldo de Broward* and in the *Sun Sentinel*. The consortium also started sending recruitment packets to local churches, especially those located in low income neighborhoods.

Camp and Franklin-Jackson had, in the meantime, talked with five public school guidance counselors at the annual celebration of the Women's Executive Club's mentoring program.

Franklin-Jackson had begun visiting community social agencies and institutions in the minority community. She went to community recreation centers and to the Boys' Clubs. She also left brochures in many locations such as supermarkets, churches, and the water department. In addition, she wrote about the program for Nova University's employee newsletter and invited referrals from employees of the University.

Franklin-Jackson had previously managed a summer program for the Broward Education and Training Office (BETA). She approached that agency early on in hopes that *Gain the Edge* might recruit some of their applicants who were just above BETA's poverty line. As it turned out, BETA paid students to further their education and offered to pay low income students who came to the program from BETA, but this approach was not in keeping with the Consortium's goal of building a love for learning in itself, so BETA did not work out as a referral source. However, *Gain the Edge* did receive five strong referrals from the Urban League in 1992.

*"The consortium also started sending recruitment packets to local churches, especially those located in low income neighborhoods."*

By June 11, 43 students had enrolled, but 36 of those had requested University School, the only school located in the southern part of the county, as their first choice. Just before the beginning of the summer

session, the Consortium participants met to parcel out the students among the different programs.

Consortium members had some concern that public school guidance counselors were not referring students to *Gain the Edge* because of their allegiance to their own summer school. A few of the 1992 students left *Gain the Edge* in the last week because they had to go to public school summer school to make up a course and it started in July.[9]

The chart below shows the enrollment at each of the *Gain the Edge* sites at the beginning and at the end of each summer session. When the numbers drop at the end of the session, it means that students left or were absent too much. When students left, they did so for a variety of reasons, including prior commitments to other activities towards the end of the session. When the numbers increased at the end, particularly for Westminster Academy, it means that the school had some students who came at the last minute. Fagley, the director there, said that the initial students were so excited about the program that they recruited friends and people at their churches during the first week.

Enrollment

| | 1992 | | 1993 | | 1994 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Beg | End | Beg | End | Beg | End |
| Ft. Lauderdale Christian | 12 | 11 | 13 | 13 | 16 | 13 |
| Pine Crest | 12 | 7 | 17 | 13 | 19 | 15 |
| University School | 19 | 21 | 23 | 21 | 25 | 24 |
| westminster Academy | 7 | 14 | 9 | 14 | 16 | 19 |
| **Totals** | **50** | **53** | **62** | **61** | **76** | **71** |

[9] The Broward County public schools run an extensive summer school program. In 1995, the public summer school served about 80,000 students. Ninety-eight percent of the public schools are open in the summer. Each school offers courses and students can choose the school they want. High school and middle school students must attend for six weeks in order to earn credit. In early June, counselors come to class to sign up students who are failing and final reports also recommend summer school for those who have failed a course. Other students can take enrichment courses or move ahead in required courses.

**1993.** The Consortium did some reassessing at the end of 1992. The group decided to further develop and unify the recruitment process and to hire Franklin-Jackson to lead the recruitment effort for the program as a whole. The Consortium set up committees for recruitment and for fundraising.

In December of 1992, *Gain the Edge* asked Franklin-Jackson to assume leadership in student recruitment, public relations, and promotion. They asked her to continue and augment her contacts with local institutions, non-profits, government agencies and others for the purpose of recruitment for the program as a whole.

In January of 1993, the consortium created a Recruitment Committee, chaired by Franklin-Jackson, with representatives from each of the four schools. This committee system led to more active participation from all the schools in the publicity and recruitment process. After Larkin of Fort Lauderdale Christian School and Brown from Westminster Academy became active participants from their respective schools, they worked on a direct mail letter, posters, and radio announcements.

In 1993, the Consortium adopted as a "flexible guideline," some recommendations from Lubbers, Fort Lauderdale Christian School Program Director, regarding the definition of "economically disadvantaged." The question of how to deal with this aspect of eligibility had been unclear in 1992, so reaching this common understanding helped staff explain the program.

After the 1993 letter was mailed to the guidance counselors, Franklin-Jackson made follow-up calls and visits to them to answer their questions and talk about the program. The guidance counselors responded more positively in 1993. They seemed to understand the program better and, also, they had received positive feedback from their students who had taken part in 1992.

Larkin wrote a letter telling his personal story of coming from a low income family and managing to graduate from college and become an engineer. A mailing house used a direct mail list to send this letter to 1,441 of Broward County's low income families with teenagers.

*"This committee system led to more active participation from all the schools in the publicity and recruitment process."*

Larkin also supervised the design and production of a poster which was sent to libraries, churches, schools and businesses. In May of 1993, members of the Recruitment Committee actually divided up a list of churches in Broward County low income neighborhoods and personally delivered the materials to the churches.

Brown had his own late afternoon radio show on a local Christian radio station. He gave a public service announcement about *Gain the Edge* during the last week in May.

In a report about recruitment in 1993, Franklin-Jackson said that Larkin's letter was second only to Camp's mailing to guidance counselors in generating responses and that both were major contributors to final enrollment figures. Other callers responded with excitement to the Larkin letter, but found that their students were too young or in too low a grade.

Franklin-Jackson noted in her report that the personal contacts with churches made by Lubbers and Larkin of Fort Lauderdale Christian School and Fagley of Westminster Academy were quite helpful and resulted in a lot of calls towards the end of the recruiting period.

Franklin-Jackson said also that each time there was a newspaper write-up, however small the article, she received several calls.

**1994.** In 1994, previous approaches were repeated with ease because they were no longer new and they had been successful before. By now, the Recruitment Committee had lists of previous contacts and plans to follow-up more intensely when appropriate.

Recruitment packages were sent to guidance counselors. For the third year, Franklin-Jackson and Camp went to the Women's Executive Club meeting, Larkin's letter went out to parents, and Brown aired the public service announcement. Many calls came in response to these last two efforts and, this time, the callers understood better the age and grade limits of the program.

One of the 1993 students at University School site was so pleased with his summer that, in 1994, he and his counselor, Jeff Davis, referred 11 students that enrolled and six more that the program was unable to accommodate. Two of those students were honor students in a magnet program. Some were foreign-born which contributed to a rich diversity in University School's 1994 program. He found that the quieter, more academic environment with the lower student-teacher ratio plus the focus on SAT preparation helped his students increase their motivation, improve their grades and gain a better understanding of what it takes to succeed in college.

*"The quieter, more academic environment helped students increase their motivation, improve their grades and gain a better understanding of what it takes to succeed in college."*

University School received by far the most interest from applicants. Franklin-Jackson believed that happened largely because University

School was the only Consortium site in the southern part of the county. When University School site reached its maximum enrollment of 25 students in 1994, the staff there started turning people away because there was no practical transportation to get the students from the southern part of the county to the other schools in the north in time for class. Some students who listed the other schools as their first choice also had transportation problems.

The volume of calls and applications was up substantially in 1994. Quite a few students applied who were not accepted for one reason or another. For some, transportation problems were the hindrance; some were too young, and a few that were eligible applied too late to be included in the bus route. Fort Lauderdale Christian initially tried to include younger students, but found that they couldn't work out a schedule that would be good for the wide range of ages. A number of other callers didn't get to the application stage because their grades were too low or because they had summer school or job conflicts with the program's schedule.

The large increase in calls in 1994 indicated that the hard work in publicity and recruitment over the three years had begun to pay off. The *Gain the Edge* program was becoming increasingly well-known and appreciated in the public schools, in the low income community, and amongst the community's various churches and non-profit institutions. Moreover, representatives from all four schools played active roles in recruitment, but the focus had moved from working for each school independently to recruitment for the entity as a whole.

### *Advisory Board*

During the summer of 1992, the Consortium developed an Advisory Board and in 1993 and 1994 Advisory Board members were invited regularly to Consortium meetings. Attendance at meetings was not very strong, but individual members of the Advisory Board did help the Consortium in a number of ways.

*"The Gain the Edge program was becoming increasingly well-known and appreciated in the public schools."*

A local banker was a particularly helpful member. He brought a contribution from his own bank and solicited other banks. He also attended Consortium meetings regularly and offered valuable suggestions to the discussions.

The Advisory Board included representation from the Broward County Public Schools, the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce, the Urban League of Broward County, the NAACP, NationsBank, Barnett Bank, and the Broward Employment and Training Administration. The president emeritus of Nova University was also a member.

## *Fundraising*

### *EVENTS*

Fundraising proved to be the most challenging part of the project for these four independent schools. In the end, they made significant accomplishments in fundraising, but their achievements did not come easily and they were not enough to sustain the program over the long-term. The following paragraphs will be an effort to tell the story to help others interested in replication to learn from the ups and downs of this consortium's efforts to raise funds. School leaders have shared their insights gained from experience in the hopes of clarifying issues for others interested in similar projects.

**Corporate Funds Needed**. Back in the very first meeting of the headmasters of the four schools in January of 1991, they reached consensus on a plan in which corporate support would be at a minimum level of 10% the first year of the grant, 20% the second year, and 30% the third year and at least 30% in any additional years. They anticipated that the fundraising would be in the hands of the four heads of schools with assistance from their development directors.

When the Consortium submitted its proposal to Plan for Social Excellence in November, 1991, it included the above percentages for corporate support and the foundation made continued payment of the three year grant contingent upon meeting the 10, 20, and 30% corporate funding levels. The foundation believed that local corporate financial commitment was essential. The foundation saw community-building as one of the goals of the project and hoped that the *Gain the Edge* project would nurture a positive, cooperative relationship between independent schools, local corporations and the public schools. Independent schools would contribute their teachers' skills and their facilities. Businesses would invest in the human potential of the community's future workers and citizens.

*"The foundation saw community-building as one of the goals of the project."*

**Chamber of Commerce.** In January of 1991, the Consortium founders discussed the idea of making contact with the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce in the near future to ask his help in fundraising. Later in the spring, they thought it would be better to prepare their promotional brochure before reaching out to the corporate community. Then, they thought it might be better to wait until the grant was approved in order to be sure they were going ahead with the project. Meanwhile, the foundation asked for a letter of endorsement from the Chamber of Commerce to show that the Chamber was informed and willing to help with fundraising in the corporate sector.

McMillan and Butts met with the Chamber's executive director in November of 1991. The executive director asked to see the Consortium's letter of endorsement from the superintendent of schools before writing the requested letter.

**1992 Fundraising**. Butts did most of the 1992 fundraising work. Camp helped with mailings. Extensive 1992 solicitations resulted in 7 gifts, 1 pledge, 34 refusals, and 83 companies that failed to respond. Total cash donations came to $4,000. In addition, the firm that printed the recruitment packets and stationery gave an "in-kind" donation of $1,700.

Even the companies that had previously funded Pine Crest's summer program for minorities were not coming through this time. One large corporation, a former funder, said that this new program didn't fall within its guidelines. It appeared that the change from one school to a consortium of four schools called for new scrutiny whereas the annual renewal of funds for the *Intensive Summer Program for Minorities* had been almost automatic.

Peña tried to encourage the Consortium, telling members to count their "sweat equity" towards the goal of $10,000 for the first year. The Consortium concurred and consequently met its goal. The following chart tracks the Consortium's 1992 fundraising activity.

*"Extensive 1992 solicitations resulted in 7 gifts, 1 pledge, 34 refusals, and 83 companies that failed to respond."*

**Fundraising Consultant.** Late in 1992, a fundraising consultant who was working with Pine Crest School suggested that the Consortium should find a corporate leader who would be a benefactor himself and who would take on a more personalized funding appeal by hosting a party and inviting students from the program to come and share their experiences. The host might speak about all of the dollars

**Consortium of Secondary Schools of Greater Fort Lauderdale**
**1992 Solicitation Schedule**

In 1992 the consortium solicited funding from 126 various corporations, private businesses, and foundations for the "Academic Enrichment Summer Program for Economically Disadvantaged Students."

| Date | Prospect Group | Information |
|---|---|---|
| April 6 | 126 local businesses | Personal letter, Brochures |
| April 13-May 26 | 126 local businesses | Personal phone calls, follow-up materials |
| June 17 | 126 local businesses | Personal letter |
| September 30 | 126 local businesses | Personal letter |
| October 8 | 85 local businesses | Solicitation letter, Brochures |
| October 20 | 8 targeted corporations | Personal letter |
| November 5 | 12 Trust Management Firms | Personal letter |
| December 1 | Various local businesses | Follow-up calls |

that donors' contributions would bring into the county from the foundation. The solicitors, however, didn't know where to find such an angel after their hard work had turned up so little.

The consultant also emphasized the importance of each school taking an active role in fundraising. Late in 1992, one headmaster commented that he had not found many people within his own school's parent body who were interested in helping to fund the summer pro-

gram. He sensed that making appeals within his school's parent community was difficult because it conflicted with the need to raise money for their school's own needs. That headmaster felt frustrated in not having had more success.

**1993 Fundraising**. In December of 1992, the Consortium decided to start a Fundraising Committee and to have each school represented on the committee. McMillan suggested that the representative to the Fundraising Committee should not be a school's development director because of a potential conflict of interest. In 1993, Consortium members decided not to solicit families from their own schools. Butts, whose office had handled the fundraising in 1992, chaired the Fundraising Committee.

With the new Fundraising Committee in action, lists of corporations and local foundations were divided up among representatives from the four schools. Some major gifts arrived from foundations and corporations, but again almost all of the successful solicitations came via Pine Crest School. Fundraising totals for 1993 came to $16,600 in cash, a $12,200 improvement over the previous year; "in-kind" donations added $5,850 more. There was $12,725 in "sweat equity" from the four schools for a total of $35,175.

**1994 Fundraising**. In 1994, $14,350 was raised in cash, all by Pine Crest. "Sweat equity" from all four schools amounted to $15,483 and there was one "in-kind" gift of $317 for a total of $30,150.

**Three Year Fundraising.** For the three years, the Consortium raised a total of $34,450 in cash, $15,000 of which came from one foundation. In the three years, the program also received "in-kind" services valued at $7,959 and the four schools contributed "sweat equity" to the amount of $28, 208. One donor who offered a total of $15,000 to *Gain the Edge* had given that money to Pine Crest to use as the school saw fit. Pine Crest then made the contribution to *Gain the Edge*.

*"In December of 1992, the Consortium decided to start a Fundraising Committee and to have each school represented on the committee."*

### *REFLECTIONS*

**Broward County Fundraising Environment**. Consortium members speculated that one reason for business reluctance to contribute to the project was that the Fort Lauderdale business community had already developed close ties with the public school system. The *Gain*

*the Edge* fundraisers said that a frequent response to their requests was "We already contribute to Partners in Excellence."

Indeed, the fundraising environment in Broward County is a competitive one.[10] Broward is sandwiched between Palm Beach and Dade Counties, both of which have more corporate headquarters than Broward County. Corporate headquarters often give more generously to their local community than local offices. There are about twenty corporations in Broward County that are solicited continuously. On the other hand, there are about 900 non-profits in the county, all of them seeking funds.

Broward County corporations have many "opportunities" to give to public education. There are at least ten non-profits that ask for money for the public schools. They include Junior Achievement, Cities in Schools, Partners in Excellence, the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce, other chambers and other programs. (There are twenty Chambers of Commerce in the county). Between 300 and 350 businesses in the county are involved in partnerships with schools. Many of those same companies also help the schools through one-time gifts or other programs. With a very large school department (more than 198,000 students in 1994-95 and constantly growing), there is no doubt that there are innumerable occasions upon which Broward County businesses are asked to help with projects related to public education.

**State of the Economy**. In 1992, the nation was just coming out of a recession which might well have been one factor in the low response to the Consortium's appeals. One Consortium leader noted that corporations in south Florida had started to downsize by 1992 and the effect grew worse each year after that. Common responses were "We are already committed" or "We are cutting back."

**Non-profit Entity**. Both Butts and McMillan said that, in retrospect, they believe it might have helped the fundraising effort if the Consortium had become a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation. The founders had hesitated to do that because of the time and money involved. As it was, some donors were confused when

*"In retrospect, they believe it might have helped the fundraising effort if the Consortium had become a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation."*

[10] Much of the information in the next two paragraphs is from a September 14, 1995 telephone conversation with Nina Randell, Executive Director, Partners in Excellence, an independent non-profit that develops business partnership programs for the Broward County Public Schools. This organization was started in 1983 by the Junior League in partnership with the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and the public schools.

asked to give the money to one school for a project involving four schools. When hearing a description of the project, some seemed to focus more on their reactions to the private schools than to the entity and its mission. Some who were not Protestant focused on the church affiliation of two of the schools even though *Gain the Edge* did not have a religious focus. Perhaps if *Gain the Edge* had been more clearly a separate entity which the member schools had elected to join, the situation would have been easier for prospective donors to understand.

**Independent Schools and Corporate Fundraising**. McMillan explained that although independent schools continually need to raise money, their experience and their success is primarily within their own constituency: their parent body, their alumni, and those corporations whose leadership includes members of their parent body. With some well-appreciated exceptions, corporations in the wider community rarely give to independent schools, and, when they do, it is usually those who do business with the school. Therefore, independent school leaders are not working from a strong body of experience when asked to solicit corporations in their larger community.

### *Follow-up and Evaluation*

**Follow-up of Students.** Teachers prepared a summary sheet for each student at the end of the summer, describing the material studied and the student's progress. This "report" was sent back to the student's home school in an effort to inform the teachers there about the student's work. Some schools awarded one "summer enrichment" credit to students who attended class for 130 hours or more.

The four schools invited *Gain the Edge* seniors to college admission programs on their campuses during the school year.

In April of 1993, the Consortium sponsored a reunion for 1992 graduates, their families, and their friends. The goals for the day were to renew old friendships and to encourage students to return for a second year. The schools sent students a letter and a questionnaire along with the invitation. The questionnaire asked whether *Gain the Edge* had helped students with math, literature, writing, computers, humanities/arts or SAT/ACT during the year. The questionnaire also asked about seniors' college preferences and whether they had already

*"Teachers prepared a summary sheet for each student at the end of the summer, describing the material studied and the student's progress."*

received any acceptances. Students were asked to indicate whether they were interested in returning for a second summer.

After the 1992 session, Nova Southeastern University, Broward Community College and Florida Atlantic University, all located in Broward County, offered scholarships to *Gain the Edge* graduates that had been referred by the Urban League.

Nova Southeastern University offered a $1,000 scholarship, renewable if a good grade point average is maintained, to *Gain the Edge* graduates accepted by Nova's undergraduate college.

At the end of July in 1993, the Consortium held a picnic at Pine Crest School for students, parents, and staff from all four schools.

**Program Evaluation.** The Consortium created a two page student evaluation form that was used by all four sites at the end of each summer session. The form asked students their opinion on a scale of 1 to 5 about the degree of their skill improvement in different areas; about the amount of homework, reading, and tests in the summer session; about attitude changes during the summer in relation to schoolwork and learning; and about the importance of transportation to their attendance. The students signed the form. Most students praised the program, and when students offered suggestions, the teachers tried to take them into account in planning for the following year.

# IDEAS FOR NEXT TIME

### *Successes*

Before beginning a section on ideas for the next iteration of this kind of a project, it is useful to stop and give attention to the many successes of *Gain the Edge*.

First of all, this program gave real support to 180 students in their academic learning and their social development at a key time in their youth. For those who received a boost that made their entry to college more sure-footed, it made a difference that will most likely have a lifelong impact on their earning ability and, therefore, their capacity to support a family and achieve their goals. For others who might not have gone on to college, the program still must have stabilized and supported their high school learning. *Gain the Edge* made a positive impact as well on the parents and loved ones of these young people who watched their children spend a summer growing academically and socially.

In addition, for twelve or more teachers, *Gain the Edge* offered an opportunity to augment their income while enriching their professional experience and permitting them to make a contribution to their larger community.

For the rest of us, the onlookers and the replicators, this project and its leaders have shown one possible path for other independent schools that want to find ways to relate to and contribute to their larger community. The early 1990's have seen increased interest in community-building and institutional collaboration both for reasons of economy and as a way of maintaining and fostering our nation's democracy. These four schools have taken the leap, reached out to their community, and shared with the rest of us both their rewards and their learning in making the effort. The need is there and these schools have responded to it.

As McMillan commented, "This country has one serious problem with the preparation of low income and minority youth for the workforce and they have a difficult challenge themselves in getting established in jobs and careers in their twenties." The challenge is great and, as the *Gain the Edge* staff, teachers and students would tell you, the rewards are great for those who move to meet it.

*"This project and its leaders have shown one possible path for other independent schools that want to find ways to relate to and contribute to their larger ommunity. "*

The following paragraphs are an effort to look at some of the issues raised in planning a project such as *Gain the Edge*. There is not one right way to do this work, but articulation and discussion of some issues early in the project should be helpful in responding to those barriers that inevitably arise.

### *Culutre and Collaboration*

For anyone attempting to bring together independent school leaders, public school staff, corporate leaders, and low income teenagers, it is well to talk up front about the fact that these are four different cultures—and culture matters. Cultural distance can be a barrier as well as cultural stereotyping and these issues can occur for all four cultures involved.

Those people who work within **independent schools** might consider the benefits that can accrue to them from the project as well as the benefits they are giving. It helps build mutual respect when all players feel there are mutual gains from participation. It can also help build appreciation within the constituency of the independent school. In *Gain the Edge*, the teachers have spoken about how their professional life has been enriched by the opportunity to research and try out new ideas in a relaxed, flexible setting. They have also increased their experience in working with a culturally diverse classroom, a skill that is increasingly of interest to independent schools as they attempt to diversify their student body.

**Public school staff** sometimes yearn for a classroom of respectful, eager learners that independent school teachers are accustomed to have and that also characterized the *Gain the Edge* program. They might feel "If only I had those working conditions, I could get such great results!" There will always be cultural barriers between public and independent schools that need to be acknowledged and given careful attention. Even if independent schools doing this type of project don't seek full collaboration, they are still dependent on the public schools' cooperation for referrals and follow-up. A project can be enriched by looking for ways that its work can complement programs that already exist in the public schools. Project staff should, however, anticipate and strive to alleviate likely cultural barriers between public and private schools.

*"A project can be enriched by looking for ways that its work can complement programs that already exist in the public schools."*

In many locations where this type of project might be developed, there will already be a working relationship between **the corporate community** and the public schools. Many school-business partnerships have been developed since the 1980s when business leaders began to see benefit in working with public schools. However, corporate leaders often have to be helped to see that independent schools also can make contributions to education in the wider community. They need to understand that programs like *Gain the Edge* will help business's future workers and will boost the general economic level of their area as well. These programs will also play a supportive role in helping the public schools meet their goal of increased student achievement. As Byer, former head of University School, has said, "independent schools have to help corporations understand that the impact of these programs will have a profound long-term effect on the lives of the students who participate."

As for **low income students** and their families, they are likely to perceive the domain of independent schools as being quite far from their world. As seen in *Gain the Edge*, that perception changes when the word comes back, based on real experience, that the program is helpful and worthwhile. Then the good news can travel fast.

### *Design and Structure*

There are a number of ideas that relate to the structure of a project, but have far-reaching ramifications for other functions.

**Separate Entity.** *Gain the Edge* leaders felt in retrospect that it might have worked better if their consortium had set up a separate non-profit entity for the program. They thought that corporations solicited by fundraisers would understand the program better if they were not asked to direct their checks to one independent school. Perhaps the construction of a separate entity, thereby moving the program out from under the wings of one school, would help multiple schools share the administrative responsibilities equally. On the other hand, it would be important that someone have a firm hand in steering the entity and that it not be a low priority for all the schools involved.

*"'Independent schools have to help corporations understand that the impact of these programs will have a profound long-term effect on the lives of the students who participate.'"*

**Executive Director.** McMillan, as executive director, seems to have been the glue that kept this collaboration together. It was he who set

the agenda, reminded people of meetings, wrote reports. He had a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to the project. But he wasn't paid for this work and neither were Butts and Camp. Each of the three had many other responsibilities. If a consortium paid a director for whom this was a primary job, that person could take the lead on recruitment and fundraising as well as on the administrative functions.

**Size of Schools**. In this project, Pine Crest was the largest of the four schools. Moreover, *Gain the Edge* grew out of a prior project at Pine Crest and the funding foundation was led by two graduates of that school. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that Pine Crest took the lead in the project. However, in fundraising particularly, the original assumption had been for shared responsibility. If schools of different sizes are planning to join in a project like this, clarification in the initial stages about relative participation in finances and other aspects of the project would be useful.

**Types of Schools**. One *Gain the Edge* staff person mentioned that when he approached businesses some people resisted the idea of contributing to a group of schools, some of which represented a religion other than their own. This should be a consideration in future replications. This is, of course, just one variable to be considered in building a consortium. Others would include shared goals, quality of teaching, capacity to add programs, location and interest. The size of a consortium is a variable as well. Variables pertinent to consortium size might include location, transportation factors, and ease of communication among members. Often starting small and building growth after achieving success works well.

**Local business group.** If a local business entity such as a Chamber of Commerce were given a stronger role from the beginning, such as becoming a member of the consortium or being part of an advisory board that helped with early planning, then the business community, feeling a greater sense of ownership in the project, might be more willing to take an active role in the funding process. The business group might also contribute some valuable insights from its perspective and it might have good networking contacts. Perhaps it could help foster relations between the private and public schools. Perhaps it might contribute office space for an executive director or it might take charge of some or all of the fundraising for the project, permitting the educators to focus on curriculum and teaching. All of this would not necessarily

*"Variables pertinent to consortium size might include location, transportation factors, and ease of communication among members."*

be easy, especially if there is not already an existing working relationship between the business entity and the independent schools. It takes time and mutual trust to build relationships which help institutions work together.

**Public School System.** Similarly, independent schools might find an earlier role for their local public school system in the planning process. Some independent schools developing summer enrichment programs build them jointly with a public school system. Others do not seek full collaboration. Either way, the public school student is the customer for the program and the summer enrichment program supports the goals of the public school system, i.e. increased student achievement. Development of an open working relationship with public schools early in the process entails asking the public school system for ideas about how the enrichment program could support and not duplicate its programs. Mutual clarification of goals should increase cooperation. Such up front openness would facilitate referrals while providing opportunity for help with wintertime follow-up and with program evaluation.

The Fort Lauderdale schools had special programs for underachieving gifted students and for dropout prevention. Students from both these programs came to *Gain the Edge* and their summer work complemented and reinforced that of their winter setting. The fit was particularly apt in these instances. This kind of dovetailing effect could conceivably be achieved in a deliberate way if the public and private schools were to communicate more closely and plan strategically for an optimal fit between programs.

While a direct approach to a school system might be ideal, it might not always work, depending on such factors as the participants' communication skills, the openness of the school system, and other issues internal to the school system at that point in time. Often, but not invariably, when people are invited to offer ideas, they respond positively. Again, relationship-building and mutual understanding takes time. For *Gain the Edge*, informal relationships with personnel in the public schools grew over time as people saw that mutual interests were served by the project.

*"Informal relationships with personnel in the public schools grew over time as people saw that mutual interests were served by the project."*

**Centralization vs. Decentralization**. One defining aspect of the Fort Lauderdale consortium was the fact that each site operated its classes quite independently of the others. The description of each site's

work shows that this arrangement permitted creativity, variety and flexibility for the teachers as they developed and carried out their curricula. Indeed, one of the strengths of *Gain the Edge* was the degree to which the teachers were able to engage their creativity and their passion for a subject in planning their courses. However, the fact that there was little or no communication among the teachers at different sites meant that there was little chance for cross-fertilization of outstanding practices or for peer support if there were rough times in the course of the work at a particular site. Replicating groups might want to consider closer cross-site communication among teachers, the front-line workers in these programs.

**Age Grouping.** Another idea might be to have sites specialize according to age group. Those serving the older teens might be the ones located on or near university campuses and devoting a lot of energy to SAT preparation and college visitation. Other sites might cater to younger teens with a focus on developing pleasure in learning, college preparatory study skills, critical thinking skills, and the long-range view of the college application process (as in the example of the guest speaker at Fort Lauderdale Christian School who told the students about steps they could take in each year of their high school career to prepare for the college application process). If sites offered programs for different age groups, it would permit returning students to take part in fresh curricula each summer while the sites could repeat successful units and field trips without worrying that their returning students would find the topics repetitious.

**College Preparation Only?** *Gain the Edge* did not collect data about the percentage of its students that went on to college. Actually, the program's youngest students would not have finished high school by the end of the program. But considering that the students who came to *Gain the Edge* represented a range of academic achievement and, considering that low income students have financial barriers working against them in regards to college enrollment, it is perhaps safe to say that not all of them did go on to college. Yet, among those who did not, most still must have improved their academic skills and understanding in those key subjects of English and mathematics, skills desperately needed in twenty-first century manufacturing, laboratory and service workers who do not graduate from college.

*"One of the strengths of Gain the Edge was the degree to which the teachers were able to engage their creativity and their passion for a subject in planning their courses."*

Therefore, a consortium of independent schools considering summer enrichment for its community's low income teens might discuss

the possibility of skill-building in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, pre-calculus, English vocabulary, and self-expression for average and above average students who want strong competencies in those areas whether for technical school or for college. Such an approach would be in keeping with the federal government's current (1995) emphasis on the school-to-work transition which aims to upgrade mathematics and English skills for technical workers as well as for the college-bound.

Importantly, such an approach might also be more supportive to the self-esteem of those students who want to "gain an edge" in their high school work, but who might seek a less expensive, more focused route to post-high school success than a four year college.

However, for the sake of the students as well as their teachers, it would be important not to decrease the intensity of the curriculum since a strength of the program is the individualized, almost tutorial, attention directed towards mastery of challenging material. This strength showed up particularly in students' appreciative comments about their learning in their summer math work. Immigrant students had similar comments about their gains in English vocabulary and self-expression.

### *Recruitment*

*Gain the Edge* sought out community agencies and institutions such as churches to spread the word about its programs. It sought coverage in local newspapers as well. The first year the Consortium purchased advertisements, but after that the project relied on announcements and stories in the newspapers for print media coverage and that worked well. *Gain the Edge* had opportunities for radio public service announcements and the program sent a direct mail letter to low income families. All of these techniques helped. As the program proved itself, news of its benefits spread by word-of-mouth and some students returned for a second and third year.

*"Gain the Edge sought out community agencies and institutions such as churches to spread the word about its programs."*

The schools resourcefully used their own constituencies as recruiting resources. Westminster looked into its database for the home churches of the school's winter students and sent fliers to those churches. University School contacted the African-American families in its school and asked them if they knew of students in their communities

who might benefit from the program. Franklin-Jackson also sent a notice to the employee newsletter of Nova Southeastern University, her employer and the sponsor of University School.

McMillan commended the work of Franklin-Jackson and said that her outreach skills to the wider community were invaluable. He felt that since many low income students are minorities it is a real asset for a project like this one to have a talented minority person leading the outreach and recruitment effort.

In a replication of this type of project, perhaps stronger relations could be developed with the public schools. If so, perhaps the summer enrichment program and the schools could together identify certain subsets of the school population that they thought might be especially worthwhile targeting in addition to those students and families who respond to a broadly-based public relations campaign.

Some school systems have a publication describing summer activities for their students in the larger community. Such a publication could be another recruiting resource.

### *Fundraising*

Several ideas pertinent to fundraising have been raised in an earlier section, among them the establishment of a separate entity for the consortium and the consideration of including a broader spectrum of sectarian schools if any religious-affiliated schools are included. Both of those steps might reduce barriers to giving felt by people reluctant to donate to independent schools or to a school affiliated with a religion other than their own. Of course, both these factors would need to be considered within the context of the overall environment in each setting.

Previous brief mention has also been made of the idea of asking a group of corporations to assume responsibility for some or all of the local fundraising aspect of this type of project. There would be two rationales for this approach. The first is mutual hometown interest and allegiance. When a community's independent schools join to offer summer enrichment to low income students of their own locality, they are basically seeking to be a more active part of their local community and to make a substantial contribution to it. Therefore, this is a legiti-

*"In a replication of this type of project, perhaps stronger relations could be developed with the public schools."*

mate community cause for a business to support. This is not a nationwide program seeking the nation's brightest low income students to prepare for the nation's most competitive colleges. This is a hometown program meant to serve low income students who are achieving somewhat less than they could potentially, but who are achieving. These students enter with motivation and *at least* a "C" average. These are local corporations' future human resources and future consumers.

A second reason to ask local corporations to assume some responsibility for fundraising is that independent schools don't have a lot of expertise or experience in fundraising outside of their own constituencies. Their talents lie in teaching and college preparation, so they might best focus their energies in that direction.

There is the question of whether participating independent schools should be required to contribute funds in addition to their "sweat equity" and their physical facilities. Some other programs do and some don't. One variable is the size of the endowment of the independent school. Few have large endowments. Phillips-Andover in Massachusetts, an exception, contributes substantially to its summer program for minorities and is even preparing to endow its summer program. The *Atlanta Summer Scholars Program* does not ask member independent schools to fundraise within their own constituencies.

Perhaps schools can find a middle ground where they do not actively fundraise within their own constituencies, but they do communicate frequently to the families within their own school about their summer program for low income students and they articulate pathways for interested persons to help financially or otherwise. Independent school families do have a diversity of interests and positive public relations may lead to the discovery of previously unknown resources. Sometimes affluent families would like to contribute to their wider community, but lack pathways. Such families might welcome the opportunity to participate in a program like *Gain the Edge* that was based within their children's school.

TRIO, a federal program under the Higher Education Act, funds summer enrichment programs including Upward Bound. The law gives priority to higher education entities or community-based organizations, but TRIO has funded summer enrichment programs in a few independent schools. The TRIO program finished a grant competition

*"This is a hometown program meant to serve low income students who are achieving somewhat less than they could potentially, but who are achieving."*

in 1995. The next one will be held in 1999 if the law is not substantially changed in the meantime.[11]

Long-term fundraising for a project like this one will always be a challenge. Considering that the focus of a project like *Gain the Edge* is local, it is important that the local community embrace it by taking an active role in the project's financing. When independent schools extend a hand to contribute to their local community, they need to be met by hands reaching back from the corporate sector and the public education sector.

## CONCLUSION

A *Wall Street Journal* article of August 8, 1995 titled "Summer School is No Longer Just for Kids Who Fell Behind" tells about dual-income, affluent families who are putting their youngsters in costly summer enrichment programs, often regarding them as added value when they would have to pay a babysitter anyhow. The article noted that some experts expressed concern that this relentless pace set by affluent families would only leave low income children and youth further behind.

Meanwhile, Upward Bound and the three other federally-funded enrichment programs for low income youth that fall under the wing of "TRIO" and that currently serve 700,000 youth nationwide, barely escaped the budgetary ax in the summer of 1995.

The simultaneous occurrence of these two trends only argues more strenuously for the validity of programs like *Gain the Edge*. They are not easy to develop; particularly thorny are the issues of long-term funding and of bringing together cultures that have not known each other well in the past so that they can team up for this type of endeavor. But to see the validity, one only has to talk to the participants, teachers and students alike, hear their stories, and see the pleasure on their faces as they tell about their experiences.

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[11] In September, 1995, Mr. Richard Sonnergren (202-708-4804) was in charge of Upward Bound programs at the U.S. Department of Education.

*"Autonomy often directly leads to innovation and change. We have an obligation to share our innovations." (Peter Relic, President of the National Association of Independent Schools)*

*"Public schools are often beleaguered. We owe it to our kids (public and private school children) to work together for the good of communities." (Peter Relic)*

*"Access to quality education may be the only answer to many of the nation's most pervasive problems: crime, heightened racial tensions, pervasive violence, etc. Many believe that independent schools have a 'public mission' to perform, otherwise they have no place in the community." (Ben Snyder, Director Emeritus of Horizons-Upward Bound).*

*"Our schools (independent schools), must stand for something larger than serving the Dalton School students. Our privileged, tax-exempt, non-profit status is only justified if there is a public purpose." (Gardner Dunnan, Headmaster of the Dalton School near San Diego).*[12]

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12 The four quotations on this page are from Alec Lee, "Working Together and Working: Public-Private Collaboration." p. 3.

Organizations interested in replicating this project may contact the Plan to receive copies of the following documents:

- Articles of Association of Consortium of Secondary Schools of Greater Fort Lauderdale
- Proposed Consortium Budget
- Financial Commitment of Consortium Schools
- Publicity Material: Newspaper Insert
- Publicity Material: Flyer
- Recruitment Letter to High School Principals
- Working Definition of "Economically Disadvantaged Youth"
- Financial Reports and Fundraising Information
- Follow-Up Letter to Student's High School
- Follow-Up Letter to Students
- Student Evaluation.